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JOE KUBERT INTERVIEW

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THE DEPT. OF LOOSE ENDS...

The colour story in this issue features the one-shot appearance of young Johnny Marsten. Although Marsten never was seen again in the series, this tale, in Will Eisner's opinion, marked a turning point in his development of the character of The Spirit. It was, he says, "an attempt to introduce something new, the dimension of 'real' emotion, into the feature."

In retrospect, fans and critics alike have commented favourably on Eisner's "naturalism," and credited him with bringing emotional maturity to the sterile adolescence of super-heroic power fables. In 1940 this was a new idea for Will. "Aside from physical pain—due to torture or righteous anger—no hero I had ever drawn, or any of those I had ever seen (except for Krazy Kat) really felt a subtle human emotion and displayed it."

"This story tried for it."

There is quite a lot of truth in what Will says. Even in the most subtly emotional comics of the 1930s, such as *Thimble Theatre* and *Terry and the Pirates*, the hero, while he may have been deeply moved, usually put on a "manly" face, and it was the reader who was actually left to shed a tear. *Thimble Theatre* came very, very close to touching displays of sentiment, but even when one felt that cartoonist Elzie Segar was on the verge of revealing the tender side of the sailor's personality, Popeye would pipe up with a gruff comment designed to conceal what we all knew was really going through his mind. This didn't lessen the emotionality of the scene—and indeed played on the reader's preconceptions about masculine heroism in a sophisticated and thought-provoking way—but it did stop just short of stripping the mask of heroism off the protagonist. Popeye might give out with a "sniff" at the mummification of the Sea Hag, but it was Wimpy who bawled, and Olive Oyl who put a hanky to her eyes. Segar did, however, point out the pitfall of overly "heroic" lack of sentiment, for in that same scene Poopdeck Pappy shed not a tear at all, and then said, with remarkable insight, "Aw, Pooey! Guess I ain't hooman!"

What Will was trying for in "Johnny Marsten" was something new for him. He wanted to show that his hero was "hooman." And, as he says, "To create an emotional situation which would extract emotion from the hero required believing and feeling on the part of the author... an uninhibited willingness to expose himself. In that context it meant taking a gamble on the tolerance level of the audience. For a young, ambitious cartoonist, this wasn't so hard."

As time went by, the "human" qualities of *The Spirit* became more and more pronounced, and Will found that "taking a gamble" was easier than he had thought. But it would be quite a while before Denny Colt became as uninhibited as he was strong and brave. "Johnny Marston" was a first step.

Anyone who has read these *Spirit* reprints for a while will know that the most popular song in Central City was a silly little novelty tune called "Ev'ry Little Bug." In this issue we present three stories central to the development of that catchy little number. The first of these episodes, "Bebop," actually doesn't feature the song at all, but it marks the intersection between the previous existence of the lyric and a developing subplot in which Ebony wanted to become a musician.

The Ebony-as-musician subplot was not originated by Will Eisner. It was the war-time invention of ghost-scripter Manly Wade Wellman, who managed to put Ebony into a number of musical situations during his period as writer of the feature. Most of these were little more than "boy with natural rhythm meets crooks," and after Eisner returned to the series, this element of Ebony's personality was put into hibernation for a short time. However, newspaper editors during the post-war period wanted to see more humour in their comics, and Will received several requests

...continued on page 18

Will EISNER'S SPIRIT MAGAZINE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

WILL EISNER

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

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APRIL 1983 • NO. 40

Will Eisner's *SPIRIT MAGAZINE*. Published bi-monthly by Kitchen Sink Comics, a division of Krupp Comic Works, Inc., No. 2 Swamp Road, Princeton, WI 54968. ISSN No. 0279-5523. Subscription rates: \$18 a year (6 issues) in North America. \$21/year elsewhere (see mail) or \$31/year airmail. Second class postage paid at Princeton, WI. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Spirit Magazine*, No. 2 Swamp Rd., Princeton, WI 54968. Contents copyright © 1983 by Will Eisner. All rights reserved under Universal Copyright Convention. The name "The Spirit" is registered by the U.S. Patent Office, Marca Registrada, Marque Deposee. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher. Printed in USA. Wholesale inquiries invited.

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"JUSTICE...MY WAY."
REUBEN M. FLAGG

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COMICS

CEBOP



...It started in the home of Commissioner Dolan ...

I'VE BEEN MADE CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERCULTURAL COMMITTEE OF CENTRAL CITY. WE BROADCAST TO ICEBERGIA FOR AN HOUR TONIGHT. HOW ABOUT TOSKOWSKY ??

THAT SQUARE FUM DELAWARE, FOOEY!!



GEE, LEMME RUN IT, COMMISH... IT'S JES MAH DISH... AH'LL GETCHA A DIXIE COMBO... ON A TWO-BEAT KICK!!

EH??

HA HA HA HA J EBONY, WHAT'S WITH YOU ??



HARRUMPH! SPIRIT, YOU'VE BEEN NEGLECTING EBONY'S MUSICAL EDUCATION! THIS BROADCAST IS PART OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S EFFORT TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS WITH OTHER NATIONS... JAZZ, INDEED! HRMPFF!

WHY, MAN, DON'T YOU KNOW...HA HA, HE'S HIP...HEY BOBBAREBOB! HA HA HA HA HA!

LONG HAIRS!!



INTUHKULTCHERUL... ..INTERSHMULTCHERUL! BOY, IF HE COULD ONLY HEAR ONE... THASSALL, JES' LIGSEN TO

REBOP
REBOP
MOP
MOP



MAESTRO, HOW'DJA LIKE TO PLAY ON A INTERNATIONAL BROADCAST UNDER MAH MANAGEMENT, O' COURSE ??

O' COURSE WE'D BE SENT, SON! POSILUTELY SENT!!

BUT..

BUT WHAT ???



BUT OUR STAR 88-MAN IS GONE... KIDNAPPED... AND WITHOUT LIL TEEBO HIMSELF, WE'S SQUARE AS A LEGLESS CHAIR!

O' COURSE!

O' COURSE Y'GOTTA HAVE YOUR PIANO MAN ... AND YOU'RE LUCKY, FOR AH AM ALSO A DETECKTUFF... SO GIMME THE FAX, JAX, AND I'LL GET HIM BACK!!



ONE HOUR
(and two solid choruses)
LATER....

SIGH,
AH'VE CASED
EVVY JUMP JOINT
IN TOWN.



ONEY PLACE LEF' IS **CUSSED CAL'S**
AND THAT JIVE DIVE'S SO TOUGH AH
DON'T DARE GO IN WIFOUT THE SPIRIT!
...WAIT... AH GOT AN IDEA!!



A quarter-beat or two later...

AHEM,
MILK!

RIGHT
HERE!



COUGH!



PLAYER-PIANO...
HMMM, THAS QUEER
IN SUCH A PLACE AS THIS.
HMM... AH'LL INVEST
A NICKEL!



ON THE OTHER
HAND... WHY BE SO
FRIVILUS WIF
MAH MONEY?!

DROP
IN
SLOT



CHEAPSKATE!
★?? YO' IS SO TIGHT
YO SHOES SQUEAK!
★??!

DROP
IN
SLOT



TEEBO!
...AH AM
EBONY WHITE
COME TO RESCUE
YOU!!

BEAT IT! AH
DON'T WANNA BE
RESCUED!

HEY YOU!
GIT OUTTA THERE
AN **PLAY**.. OR
AH'LL BASH YO
LIL HIDE!









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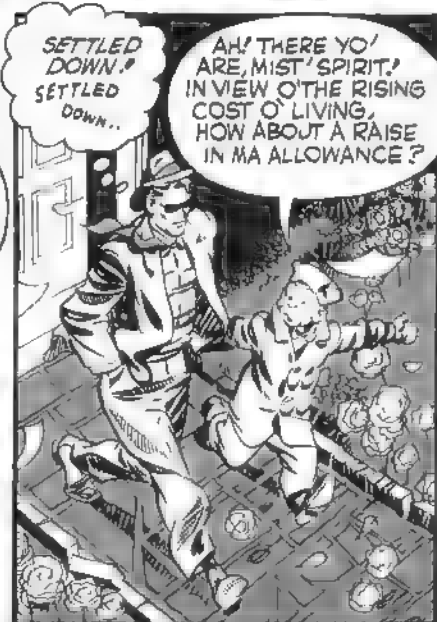
♪ EVRY LI'L BUG ♪

The SPIRIT

BY WILLIE EISNER



Originally Published April 27, 1947

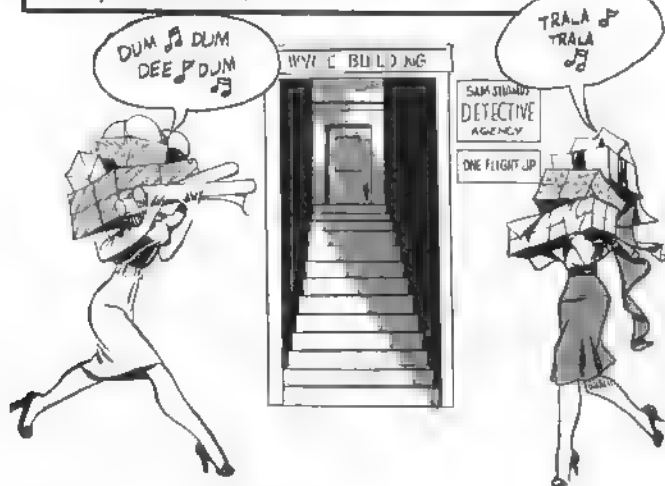








And so at 10:30 the next morning, two vultures (female, that is) tired of circling their victim, swoop for the kill





LYRICS BY EBONY WHITE

(ASSISTED BY WILL EISNER.) ©1947

"EVERY LITTLE BUG"

MUSIC BY

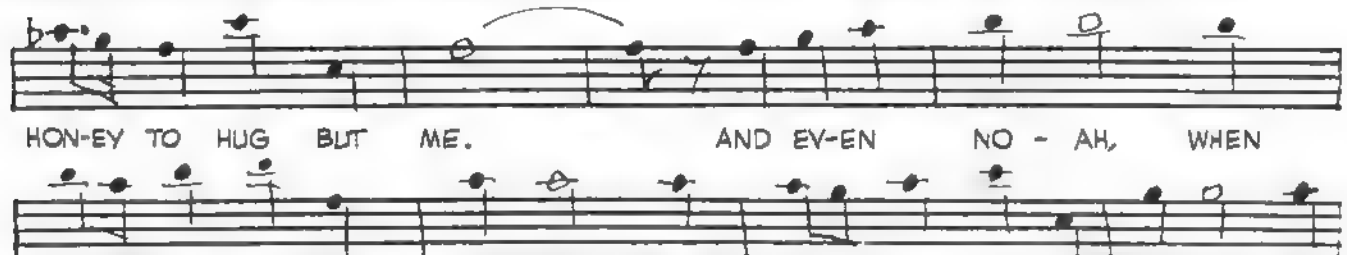
BILL HARR



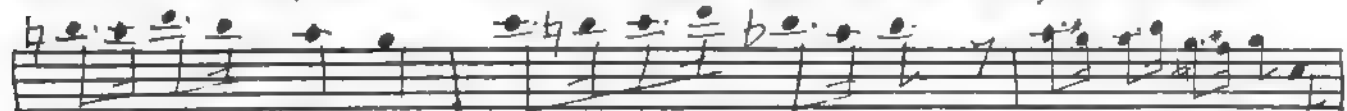
SNUGG-LE AND SQUEEZE. OH, EV-RY LITT-LE BUG HAS A HON-EY TO HUG B



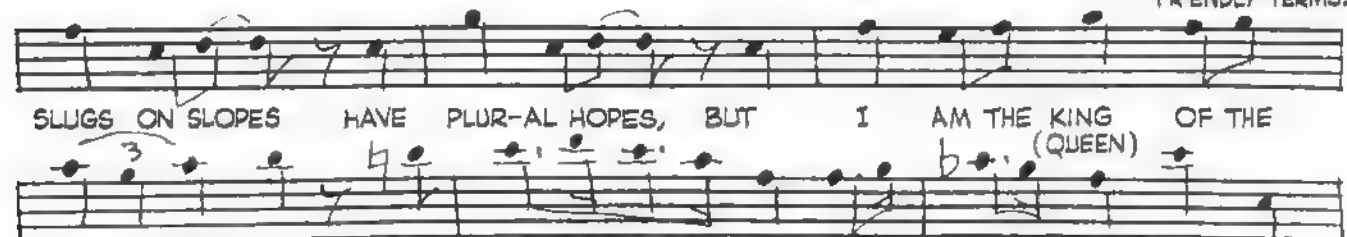
KNOWS FROM THE GLOW THAT'S HIS GAL GO-ING BY. OH, EV-RY LITT-LE BUG HAS A



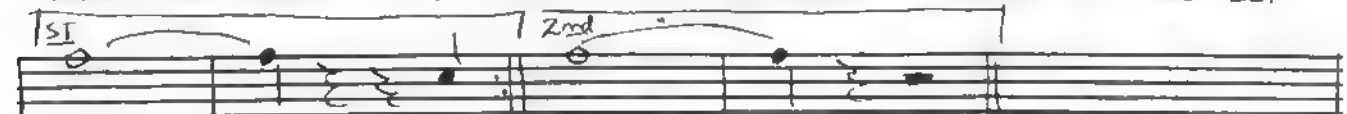
BUILD-IN' HIS ARK, WOULD NEV-ER KEEP ONE LONE-LY LARK, OR RE-FUSE A



FRENDLY TERMS.



SING-U-LAR DOPES. OH, EV-RY LITT-LE BUG HAS A HON-EY TO HUG BUT



ME. -

THE

ME.

END.

to play up the "kid sidekick" angle in a slapstick way. Throughout 1946, aided by the extremely cartoony layout help of Jack Spranger, he emphasized the fun part of crimefighting more than at any other point in the history of the series — or, for that matter, more than any time in his life's work to date. The resulting emphasis on *Ebony's* potential for "funny" situations is seen in retrospect as a weakness, but at the time it was an answer to specific demands from both the syndicate and newspaper editors, and Eisner met it with enthusiasm.

The song *Ev'ry Little Bug* was not originally associated with Ebony. It had first been introduced in June 1946 in a story called "Poole's Toadstool Facial Cream" (reprinted as "Beauty" in *Kitchen Spirit* no. 24). That episode was also the first of many, many tributes to actress Lauren Bacall, for whom he seemed to have an above-average fondness. Bacall had hit the screen in *To Have and Have Not* in 1945. In addition to her co-star, Humphrey Bogart, the film also featured a short but memorable part played by singer-songwriter Hoagy Carmichael. It was Hoagy's first role as an actor, and he played the sympathetic slow-talking Cricket, who cared for Bacall as a pal and played the piano most of the time he was on camera.

To Have and Have Not was itself a remake of a previous Humphrey Bogart movie, *Casablanca*. In that version, it was Bogart who palled around with the piano player, a part played to perfection by Dooley Wilson. Wilson's character was, of course, Sam, the man who was told to "play it," "it" being the song *As Time Goes By*.

When Will Eisner fell in love with the image of Lauren Bacall, he brought her friend Hoagy along for the ride, but instead of making his name a play on Cricket, he called the character Gam, after Sam, and he even had someone say, "Play it, Gam, play it." But the song the Carmichael clone played was neither *Hong Kong Blues* from *To Have and Have Not* or *As Time Goes By* from *Casablanca*. What Gam played was "Evvy li'l ol bug got a baby t'hug... but me, as yew can see... evvy little bug got a baby t'hug... but me, I got a goon to spoon."

Meanwhile, in real life, a guy named Bill Harr, whom Will had met during the war when they were both stationed at the Pentagon as journalists, showed up in New York City. It seems that Harr had aspirations to become a songwriter and he had gravitated to the Big Apple in pursuit of that goal. Once in town, he looked up his old army pal, Will, and thus was born their brief collaboration as songwriters.



The lyrics to *Ev'ry Little Bug* had been kicking around in the *Spirit Section* for quite a while by this time. Gam came up with a few more lines before disappearing from the series forever. He was in turn succeeded by a black tapdancer named **Bucken Wing** who seemed to show up when least expected and run a few verses by. An Italian jeweller named **Pop Parelli** was heard to mumble an improvised refrain, and even **Murmansk Manny**, a Russian heavyweight, had his own version of the song.

Finally, Will dusted off the old "Ebony as musician schtick" he had been bequeathed by Manly Wade Wellman and got down to the serious business of presenting the song to his audience. "Bebop," introducing Li'l Teebo the ace 88 man, was the connective link, and it was promptly followed by "Ev'ry Li'l Bug" (April 27, 1947), in which Ebony got the unseen Bill Harr to compose a melody and a simplified form of the song's sheet music appeared on the last page of the story.

EV'RY LITTLE BUG

LYNN BY
WILLIAM STEADMAN

Moderately (with a *sf*)

Бүтээн байгуулалтын байр





JOE KUBERT

Joe Kubert, who began his professional career when he was only twelve, has worked for many comics companies and drawn many characters, including Tor, Hawkman, Sgt. Rock and Tarzan. He currently operates The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey. Will Eisner interviewed Kubert at New York's Princeton Club on August 3, 1982.

EISNER: Okay, Joe, let's talk about work, style, philosophy and a little background, okay?

KUBERT: My shaking my head doesn't come through?

EISNER: Joe just shook his head, nodding vigorously. Let's keep it casual; the kind of conversation we would have had back in our studio in Tudor City. Remember Tudor City? You joined us about 1941 I think.

KUBERT: I was going from junior high school into The High School of Music and Art in New York. I think I was not quite twelve years old at the time. My first job was up at your place during summer vacation. I was hired to sweep floors, erase the art pages, whiting out and cleaning up on Chuck Cuidera's work and so on.

EISNER: Do you remember who was in the shop at that time?

KUBERT: Tex Blaisdell was there, Nick Viscardi... Dave Berg had just started doing...

EISNER: ...Blackhawk.

KUBERT: Yes. And he was doing a backup piece in the *Spirit* comic. My first big thrill was that on the bottom quarter of a back page I was permitted to do a short

strip. I remember that it was almost the end of the summer. It was just great!

[chuckle]

EISNER: And there was Chuck Mazoujian and Bob Powell was doing *Mr. Mystic*. He was there until the war

KUBERT: That's right. And *Lady Luck* was done by Nick Viscardi.

EISNER: Yeah, Nick came in to replace Chuck Mazoujian who left. Then Tex Blaisdell joined us after awhile.

KUBERT: Tex and I used to play handball during lunch. I don't recall exactly what his job was.

EISNER: He was doing humor stuff... very funny! Hmmm... as time goes on my memory of the details of the shop gets less reliable.

KUBERT: Tex is now working at my school as an instructor.

EISNER: That's the Joe Kubert School in Dover. I want to get that in. There's something of a gap between us in years. When you were with the Will Eisner studio I was twice your age. But now I'm only 20% older! [laughter] You're aging more rapidly than I am! [laughter] Let's talk about where comic art is going and where we've seen it go over the years.

What was the first feature you handled after leaving my shop?

KUBERT: The very first strip I did was for the Holyoke Publishing Company if I remember correctly. The guy I sold my work to was named Temerson.

EISNER: Temerson had no teeth!

KUBERT: That's right! [laughter]

EISNER: I remember he was always chew-

ing on little bits of paper... "gumming," I should say!

KUBERT: Temerson hired me to do a strip called *Voltan*. That's while I was still in high school.

EISNER: What do you think has happened to the field?

KUBERT: Well, I believe the biggest change to take place in the past two or three years is our audience. Our reader thirty or forty years ago was a cross section of the general population. That is, most of our material was sold at newsstands and most people had access to those newsstands or candy stores. The kind of material we were doing then was of a general nature to satisfy and be of interest to that kind of audience. As you well know, our audience today is heavily fan-oriented. Not too long ago—within the last ten years—if you got a very vociferous letter from a fan and followed his suggestions, you knew that sales were going to drop. The fans were in the minority. So, whether fans liked or disliked material really bore very little relationship to what a general audience would accept.

EISNER: What do you think the artwork was then? Was the drawing style different then and today? Do you sense a great difference in art?

KUBERT: Oh yes. I think you can see that by looking at any of today's comic books. Most of the people who got into the comic books years ago really didn't have any intention of being comic book artists or cartoonists. Their backgrounds were classical art or fine arts. That is, they studied anatomy, basic drawing com-



HERE IS AN ISLAND... TWENTY MILES LONG AND TWO AND A HALF MILES WIDE... TWO MILLION PEOPLE INHABIT THIS COMPARATIVELY SMALL BIT OF LAND... IT IS THE HEART OF THE ARTISTIC AND COMMERCIAL WORLD



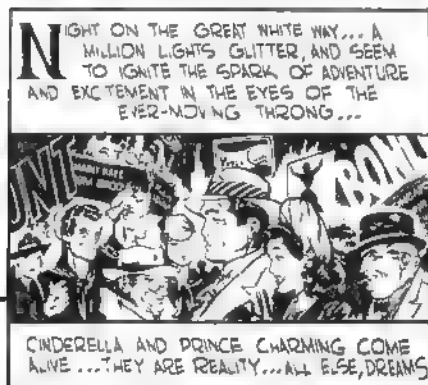
ITS STEEPLES REACH TOWARD THE HEAVENS... ITS PEOPLE'S DREAMS EVEN BEYOND!

TO THEM, THIS "BAGDAD ON THE HUDSON" MAY BE THE MEANS OF FULFILLING ALL THEIR ASPIRATIONS.



THE STORIES OF THE BIG TOWN ARE AS MANY AND AS VARIED AS THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES... THEY TELL OF THOSE WHO STRUGGLED, SWEATED, CURSED... AND OF THOSE WHO REACHED UP AND TOUCHED A STAR...

Unpublished newspaper and comic book art from Kubert's 1944-46 period reveals Eisnerian influences in their brushwork and sentiment.



NIGHT ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY... A MILLION LIGHTS GLITTER, AND SEEM TO IGNITE THE SPARK OF ADVENTURE AND EXCITEMENT IN THE EYES OF THE EVER-MOVING THROG...

CINDERELLA AND PRINCE CHARMING COME ALIVE... THEY ARE REALITY... ALL ELSE, DREAMS



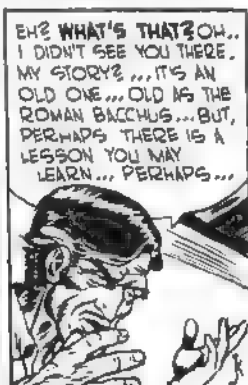
BUT, IN A BOWERY DIVE...



IN A DARK CORNER, A HUNCHED FIGURE SITS... AN EMPTY LIQUOR GLASS IN HAND... A HAUNTED, GAUNT LOOK ON HIS FACE...



...IT COULD HAVE BEEN... IT COULD HAVE BEEN...



EH? WHAT'S THAT? OH... I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE. MY STORY? ...IT'S AN OLD ONE... OLD AS THE ROMAN BACCHUS... BUT, PERHAPS THERE IS A LESSON YOU MAY LEARN... PERHAPS...

THE INTENTION OF THIS BOOK IS TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM FORGETTING... FORGETTING WHAT HAPPENED IN GERMANY, OF THE COUNTLESS INNOCENT MILLIONS SLAUGHTERED BY THE BLOODY, SADISTIC NAZI!

IF THIS BOOK CAN IMPRINT IN THE READER'S MIND, A PICTURE OF THE FATE WE AMERICANS SO NARROWLY ESCAPED, IT WILL HAVE SERVED ITS PURPOSE WELL!

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TWICE TOLD TALES

A MILESTONE IN COMICS



position and so forth to begin with.

EISNER: Can you remember any one artist, in particular, who fits that?

KUBERT: Heck... well, yourself, for one.

EISNER: I wasn't really interested in being an illustrator. I guess I tried, at one point, to be one. But do you say that these men thought of themselves as illustrators?

KUBERT: I would think so, yes. Men like Reed Crandall. Another would be Lou Fine, whose work was very much in a classic mold. They were extremely talented people who were able to apply their abilities as artists for what I think is the first aim of the cartoonist: to tell a story. Story, dramatics, emotion... They were artists *first*, who were trying to tell a simple story with pictures.

EISNER: As illustrators they weren't particularly concerned with the story?

KUBERT: Years ago the cartoonist came into this business with a more-or-less classic art background and an ability to just plain *draw*. I still think we must all start from that base. Comic book artists today—the young cartoonist in comics today who are looked upon by many fans as being absolutely terrific—I find are technically inept to some degree. They have acquired their basic abilities from *other* comic book artists. However, what they do have is a fervor and deep involvement with comics, and that fire comes across. I think the majority of the guys who did comic books years ago approached it as a job.

EISNER: As a business. You mean they were shoemakers. *Good* shoemakers, but shoemakers.

KUBERT: Well, that was at a time when money was very hard to come by. The end of the depression.

EISNER: Understandable... Years ago when I referred to comics as my “medium,” they’d laugh at me. They said, “Will, you’re putting on airs. It’s just a good way to make a living.” A lot of them left when the money diminished. I know that Fred Guardineer left comics to become a mailman because he said, “I don’t think I can make as much money in comics as I can being a letter carrier.” He may have gone on to become a great cartoonist. I thought he was very good at the time. So, you say today the artists, the cartoonists, are more enthusiastic?

KUBERT: They’re much more emotionally involved with what they’re doing. That is also because many of these new artists come from the fan population themselves. They started as fans, doing illustrations for the fanzines, then...

EISNER: Like Richard Corben.

KUBERT: That’s right. The young cartoonists today are doing it for the same reason people are coming to my school, for example, because cartooning becomes a compulsion. It’s not just something they’re doing for the dough. It’s something that they’re doing because they

must. It’s a...

EISNER: Commitment.

KUBERT: Absolutely.

EISNER: I want to pursue that. I think it’s very important because it’s there where philosophies become functional. That’s the heart of this conversation. You’ve made an impact on the medium. There are a whole bunch of people who have made a contribution and you’re one of them. Let’s talk about what you did. What was your first main feature, your first really big...

KUBERT: I think that would have to be *Hawkman*. M.C. Gaines was the publisher.



Golden-Age Hawkman by Kubert (1947)

EISNER: That was Charlie Gaines—Bill’s father. This was after Temerson. [chuckle]

KUBERT: Not too long after, but after.

EISNER: You did the entire feature yourself? Who wrote it?

KUBERT: I think Bob Kanigher wrote some of them. Another outstanding writer who did many of the *Hawkman* scripts was Gardner Fox. He’s not been in the field for years, but he had done a tremendous amount of work for DC. He worked for Julie Schwartz.

EISNER: Did *Hawkman* go from Charlie Gaines to DC or did it stay with Bill Gaines when Charlie died?

KUBERT: I think that all the comic books that Bill’s father was publishing were sold to DC. His titles included *Green Lantern*, *The Flash*...

EISNER: I see. So you began doing *Hawkman*.

KUBERT: *Hawkman*, *Flash*, *Sargon*, *Vigilante*. In the years that I’ve been working there were many. When you went into the army I was also lucky enough to get to ink Lou Fine’s pencils when he was doing *The Spirit* in your absence.

EISNER: Is that right?

KUBERT: I had to commute to Stamford, Connecticut while I was on summer vacation from high school. That was *another* summer vacation job, several years after Tudor City. I was inking Lou’s stuff.

EISNER: Joe, did I ever check your working papers? [chortle]

KUBERT: I never submitted them, so I doubt if you checked them.

EISNER: Oh boy! [chuckle] So you worked closely with Lou? You inked on Lou’s pencils? I know it was probably a joy to work on his penciling.

KUBERT: It was a revelation!

EISNER: You always felt like you were ruining it, didn’t you? [chuckle]

KUBERT: That’s correct. He always used a hard pencil and never seemed to use an eraser.

EISNER: You know, he used a mechanical pencil. He used HB Scripto. So did I, for years, too.

KUBERT: Did you really? I never had the opportunity to see your pencils.

EISNER: The reason is that a Scripto lead lasts a hell of a lot longer than a regular pencil. And it doesn’t need sharpening.

KUBERT: [guffaw] Alex Kotzky was working up there at the same time. We were both inking Lou’s stuff. And there were others...

EISNER: Oh, probably Robin King... There was a whole bunch of guys up there. It was the Gurley Building in Stamford where “Busy” Arnold operated my magazine and his magazines while I was in the army.

KUBERT: Incidentally, the first time I ate unkosher food was in Stamford.

EISNER: Nonkosher? [laughter] No kidding?

KUBERT: Across the street there was a small delicatessen...

EISNER: Do you remember much about working with Lou? He was a remote kind of fellow

KUBERT: I never heard his voice raised in anger in all the time I worked there. I was just a kid, and I’m sure that I loused up more things than I did correctly. But I never heard one word of disparagement or complaint. [chuckle] And he was a weight lifter, you know. He could handle himself.

EISNER: He lifted weights because of his “game” leg. He had to do that. He was a quiet fellow and if he ever had any annoyances he never commented about it. He only showed it very quietly. I could sense an annoyance. He would be annoyed if I made a criticism of his panels and layout. But I was always obsessed with composition and the story telling and so forth. His obsession was rendering and technique and style.

KUBERT: Well, you knew him far better than I did. I only remember that he was very quiet and very nice... friendly... and he would never push. If you had a question he’d answer it. He was always willing to help you in any way he could, which I think is the best way to teach.

EISNER: Well, that was one thing I do recall about you when you worked at the shop. You always asked questions. [chuckle] So, how long did you work on his stuff?



Dinosaur Fighter: Kubert created *Tor* in 1953 as a 3-D comic, later resurrecting the feature for DC in 1975 and *Sojourn* in 1977. (right)

KUBERT: Just one summer. I commuted from Brooklyn to Connecticut five days a week. I never stayed over. My mother always insisted I get home.

EISNER: Let's go back to *Hawkman* and the other features that led you to DC where you remained for a while. That was, I guess, your major client.

KUBERT: Well, there were many other publishers before I finally got to DC, the top of the line.

EISNER: Was that after the war?

KUBERT: Yes, or shortly before the war was over. There were about twenty-seven or twenty-eight comic book publishers in business. As a matter of fact, anybody who owned a closet could open a publishing office and was called a publisher. [chuckle] And I found myself working for a good number of these places while still going to high school. I'm loathe to admit it but I attended Music and Art High on my own schedule of two days a week because on the other three days my buddy Norman and I were haunting every publisher on the island of Manhattan.

EISNER: Norman who?

KUBERT: Norman Maurer. Norman was my partner when we published the 3-D comics. We were in business with the St.

John Publishing Company.

EISNER: What happened to Maurer?

KUBERT: Maurer is now a movie producer, in animation writing and creating at Hanna-Barbera. He's developed a lot of properties for them and is doing very well out in California. He married one of the daughters of the Three Stooges during World War II. Moe Howard was his father-in-law. I was there for the wedding.

EISNER: Ha! Really?

KUBERT: This was a rich, yeasty time, when comic books really instilled the kind of love that I have for this cartoon business. Norman went off on a different track. At that time I was starting to do more of the superhero adventure kind of stuff. Norman was into the type of simple illustration that Charlie Biro was doing, and went to work for him—almost half-humorous, half-serious stuff. So we sort of separated at that point. We both went into partnership when I got out of the army, which was about 1952 or '53.

EISNER: You were in Korea overseas?

KUBERT: It was during the Korean War, but I was sent to Germany. They got loused up in their sense of direction. [laughter]

EISNER: Thank goodness! I visited Korea in '55 and it wasn't nice. Germany was better duty. So, Maurer was an artist then. I remember Biro's work. It was much more fragile. It wasn't superhero. It was crime and gangster stories.

KUBERT: It was a different style than my own preference.

EISNER: Bob Wood and Charlie Biro, right?

KUBERT: Right. Bob was the writer. Charlie Biro was also a writer, but more the artist.

EISNER: I remember Biro being a big, handsome, wonderful-looking fellow.

KUBERT: That's right. Eventually, Charlie and Bob were responsible for that entire empire—and it was an empire—*Crime Does Not Pay*, *Daredevil*, *Boy Comics*, a whole slew of stuff that was very successful for the boys and for Lev Gleason, the publisher.

EISNER: They weren't publishing themselves, you mean. They were supplying the entire contents of a book... they were packaging?

KUBERT: They were packaging and they had a piece of the action. And then that whole empire crumbled for one reason or another. I have some knowledge of the story, but it's like second or third hand... But he went into TV production.

EISNER: Who did? Charlie Biro?

KUBERT: Yes. Charlie wound up in TV, in graphics, and held a kind of lower echelon position, from what I've been told, and eventually died.

EISNER: Yeah, he did die young. So, Maurer went off to Hollywood, so to speak, and in a different direction. Now you mentioned something that was very interesting to me. You talked about the characters you did as "superheroes." They didn't call them superheroes then; they called them "costume characters" at our studio. Is that what they called them? Do you remember that?

KUBERT: Adventure stuff.

EISNER: They were called adventure stuff too, yeah. I was trying to remember because the term superhero didn't exist until recent years. I believe they called it costume characters because that was a problem I had with Busy Arnold and the Register & Tribune Syndicate. They wanted me to make *The Spirit* a costume character. That's why he had a mask and wore gloves.

KUBERT: That was your concession? [chuckle]



Kubert and Maurer invent 3-D comics. (1953)



EISNER: I didn't want to, but, frankly, it was too good a deal to screw up so I gave in. I remember Busy Arnold, my partner, was on the phone asking, "Does he have a costume?" And I said, "Yes, he has gloves and a mask." "That's a costume?" Arnold said. The superhero or heroic type of costume was beginning to be a kind of specialization with you then. Can you carry me up to, say, the middle 1950's?

KUBERT: Let me think back a second. Everyone who got into cartooning at the time that I started usually selected a model as a guide for his work. That is, somebody whose work they felt gave them the kind of kick that they would like to introduce into their own work. The three guys that were the most outstanding in syndication, as you well know, were Milton Caniff, Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. Those three probably sired more cartoon-

ists, unintentionally, than any other group in the history of cartooning and comics.

EISNER: Oh yeah. They were the three most watched. The "influencers."

KUBERT: That's right. Norman and Biro's work gravitated toward Caniff's style. I was more influenced by Raymond and Foster. That was the separation of our work. And that happened to almost every novice that came into the business. We would try to emulate our "model," the one whose work we liked and admired, much like the current crop of comic book artists look to *their* comic book artist heroes.

EISNER: That's very important because after the early 50's I lost contact with the field of entertainment comics. You remained in contact with the work of the artists of the time more often than I.

KUBERT: You were several levels beyond us.

EISNER: Well, not really. I was working in a different world, doing different things.

KUBERT: I'm talking about guys who were trying to secure a foothold, trying to get started. Before I went into the army, I was a single guy, loving the work. But as soon as I finished a job and got a check for it I would sort of "retire" and "regroup." But I never really stopped drawing. I always drew during the hiatus, but it was for myself. That was when I tried putting ideas together for a syndicated strip; a strip of my own, to write and draw.

EISNER: So to you too, really, it was a skill; a professional skill.

KUBERT: Yes. Hopefully I was acquiring the technical skill all along, but I would always be trying to do what I really wanted to do.

EISNER: Which was?

KUBERT: To create a strip. To create something over which I'd have complete control, something that would really go. To take the kind of step that you had already taken. What I meant before when I said that you were way beyond us was in this regard. When we talk about work-for-hire, that's exactly what we were doing. We all came from that condition where we did the work. The idea of acquiring rights or obtaining ownership didn't even dawn on us because we were so grateful that somebody would even buy our stuff, that somebody would actually publish it. I felt that when they bought my artwork, they bought *everything*. As I said, we were just trying to get a toehold, a way, a means whereby those things that we dreamed about could finally be gained. But how do you do that? How do you get to that point? You do it by taking any job that comes along so that when an opportunity arrives you're in a position to take advantage of it.

EISNER: Well, that's a very important

insight into what the artist was thinking, where they came from and how they worked. Would you think it fair to say that between the 50's and middle 60's the artists working in comic books never thought or never even had a hope that they'd go beyond comic books?

KUBERT: Generally speaking, yes. But "never had a hope?" No...

EISNER: The guys who were doing daily strips thought of themselves as being entertainers.

KUBERT: I guess so. You were in that category.

EISNER: I didn't quite see it that way. I equated what I did rather to developing new applications of the medium. I was more enterprising than most at that time, perhaps.

KUBERT: You were perhaps more far-seeing.

EISNER: Well, I'll admit that I thought always in terms of the fact that, for me, this was a kind of literary form, for want of a better description. I call it an art form—actually a *medium*—that had far more dignity and far more structure than it was getting credit for. So, I did not think of myself as an entertainer.

KUBERT: I think you felt that way because you had control of the writing. Most of the people who were artists were completely and totally divorced from the writing aspects of a comic book script. They were hired strictly as an artist and should they venture to step out of their "limitation" as artist and try to change the script they were jumped on. You were not allowed...

EISNER: Was that how it was, say, at DC or at Martin Goodman's place?

KUBERT: Oh, most definitely! With 90% of the working cartoonists.

EISNER: That was common to all the publishing houses at the time?

KUBERT: Until an artist rose to a level where he was accepted by the editor as intelligent enough to actually put words together. Finally, the editor would say to him, "Well, if you have a problem, you can add a panel. Never change the words, but if you feel that you can't tell the story well within the prescribed script, maybe you can add a panel."

EISNER: Well then, that had an effect on the growth and development of the art.

KUBERT: Oh, no question. If you had some input into the story, you felt that you could benefit the final results. That is what we were striving for. We wanted to be able to participate in the portrayal of a story by more than just drawing pictures to words. Many of us were working on scripts that we thought were terrible, absolutely *awful*. But that was the last thing we would tell an editor. That was like yelling sour grapes. And, besides, it wasn't too difficult to find an immediate replacement who wouldn't complain



Initial Sketches: The very first drawings of Hawkman and Hawkgirl by Kubert while collaborating with DC editor Julie Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox on *The Brave and the Bold* No. 34.

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EISNER: So what you're saying, actually, is that today's comic book artist may not necessarily be more intelligent or more intellectual or more feeling than the artist between the 50's and 60's, but the fact is that the guy in the 50's or 60's was inhibited. He never had the opportunity to do any thinking?

KUBERT: That is correct. You know, Will, I think we are making some cogent points here.

EISNER: These are important to cover, don't you agree, because as far as I'm concerned, it is critical to our growth that we understand the medium we're working with. In the process we must understand how we feel about what we do.

KUBERT: What you're doing in this series of interviews I think is valuable. EISNER: Well, I hope so, because I expect to continue pushing at the limita-

tions of this medium. Let's talk about style and technique in the way you work. How dependent have you been on photography or photographic reference?

KUBERT: I think that when I began I depended on it very little and I'm afraid my work showed it. [chortle]

EISNER: How did you come to use photography?

KUBERT: I came to realize that it was much more important than I first imagined. Not for copying so much to use as a swipe, but to use it as reference.

EISNER: So you limit its use to reference. All right, let's talk about that because it's a use of technology that has to do with style and working habits. There are cartoonists—comic book artists—who depend heavily on photographs. I know one team whose members go out and take photos of scenes that they're going to employ in a particular sequence. They go so far as to bring the photos back to the studio and sometimes go so far as to xerox or trace them. Some use photography of people in action as models, the way a painter uses a live model. Do you know of anyone currently producing who does this on a major scale?

KUBERT: I don't really. As far as I'm concerned, the difference between a piece of reference and a swipe is this: a swipe you use whole. That is, you use an illo or a photograph and copy it exactly. I do very little of that, even today. What I strive for is an emotional effect. Unless I really *understand* that which I'm working on—for instance, if I'm doing animals—I'll get as many photos as I can, go down to the zoo, get a sense of what the animal is like, the way it acts, the way it moves, its expressions, etc. Each animal has a distinct expression, depending on particular conditions. If I can "feel" that, I can draw the animal without any swipes at all. I think it also gives animation and life to the drawing that using swipes doesn't achieve.

EISNER: Was that true also when you did *Tales of the Green Berets*?

KUBERT: Yes, to a great extent.

EISNER: There, I would imagine, you'd be using a lot of photography...

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EISNER: Personally, I happen to agree with you. But with my work it's just the opposite. I use references less and less as time goes on. I have a different purpose

in mind. You're concerned with technical accuracy.

KUBERT: Oh, yes. Absolutely. Especially in the war stuff. It was necessary that I draw a tank that looks like a tank! A particular, specific tank. If I'm going to draw a jeep, well, you know from the stuff you've done for the army manuals, Will, and your *PS* magazine, that you can animate a jeep or a tank and can exaggerate the hell out of it, but unless you have an accurate picture to work from, one that incorporates all the nuts and bolts and guns, it's just not going to look right.

EISNER: So, anyway, you have a fairly large reference file. You told me once that you had an enormous one that somebody gave you. What's that story?

KUBERT: When Carmine Infantino became publisher of DC ten or twelve years ago, he thought at that time that his executive position would preclude any time for drawing, so he decided to get rid of all his equipment. He had a file he had accumulated over the years as a cartoonist, his drawing table, his lamp, his taboret. He said that he was going to sell *everything*. It was taking up a lot of room in his apartment and he wasn't using it anymore. He asked if I'd be interested in buying it. My friendship with Carmine goes way back. He was working on *The Flash* when I was doing *Hawkman*.

EISNER: Ahh. That was pretty far back.

KUBERT: I said, "Look, Carmine. You put it up for sale. Whatever anybody else

will offer you, don't sell it to them. I'll pay you." That's how I came to acquire his file material.

EISNER: It was an enormous file?

KUBERT: Yes. They're very helpful, really. Instead of having to go through an entire encyclopedia, everything is categorized and cataloged.

EISNER: Well, your features always seem to involve technical accuracy. What was the last major feature that you did? When did you do *Tarzan*?

KUBERT: Within the last seven years.

EISNER: That recently! Let's go earlier than that. Let's say in the 60's. What occupied you the most then?

KUBERT: That's when I was doing *Tales of the Green Berets*, the syndicated strip.

EISNER: Through the 60's?

KUBERT: About three years in the 60's.

EISNER: Robin Moore wrote the daily strips for you, didn't he?

KUBERT: No, not really. Jerry Capp was writing the strip.

EISNER: I was under the impression that for the most part it wasn't until recent years that you wrote any of your own stuff, but now you tell me that you did.

KUBERT: I'd been writing *Tor* when I got out of the army, which was back in the early 50's.

EISNER: Oh, you began writing then? Very good!

KUBERT: Then I was offered editorial reins at DC. When Carmine took over the publishing in 1968, he asked me to come in. I was asked to take about ten books

to edit at that time. In addition I would be doing my own work in *Sgt. Rock*.

EISNER: At DC you didn't write, did you?

KUBERT: I did when I accepted the editorial position. I wrote all the *Tarzan* adaptations.

EISNER: I see. How did you write? Did you write them out on a typewriter?

KUBERT: I can't type.

EISNER: So what do you do? You lay them out on a...

KUBERT: You don't type either?

EISNER: Awful! I write it out either longhand or write it out as I go.

KUBERT: Break it down?

EISNER: Oh yeah, break it down as I go. I start off by laying it out on a large scale. I'm dealing with a total story now. Even with *The Spirit* I first began by dealing with a total story. After the overall rough I'd establish the beginning and the end. I'd break it down into segments.

KUBERT: That's *precisely* how I do it!

EISNER: Good. Then I break the big segments into panel segments and write my balloons. I'd lay my balloons right on the drawing board because I didn't have the time. Today I rough it out on a sheet of paper then copy it onto the final illustration board, fine tuning it as I go along. I write in the balloons, then squiggle in a character doing what I think he's going to do.

KUBERT: That's exactly the way I work. *Exactly*

EISNER: You don't make a tight rough? Now Gil Kane, for example, says he makes a very tight rough.

KUBERT: No, I find that inhibiting. I find it has a tendency to stiffen. The more times I re-do a drawing, the less spontaneous it becomes. During my editorship at DC, since I was doing a lot of artwork at the same time, I was continually looking for ways to get the stuff done more quickly. Not at the expense of the quality; merely time-wise. One of the ways I did this was to do a rough breakdown 6 x 9 in pencil and finish it as smoothly as I could, xerox that, blow it up to the 10 x 15 size, put an acetate on, and ink it. P.S., it took three times as long and didn't come out nearly as well.

EISNER: That's how I got to using blue pencil way back when we were working in the Eisner & Iger shop. I would lay out the stories... Do you remember this at the Tudor City studio?

KUBERT: That was the first time I'd ever seen blue pencil used.

EISNER: Is that right? I found that it added what you talk about: spontaneity. Later on I used it for *PS* magazine to save time. I'd blue-pencil a layout, somebody would pencil on top of it and then we'd lay a vellum on top of it and ink it so we wouldn't have to erase the pages. But that was a production technique. You did lose something each step of the way.

Months later, I graduated...



Syndicated Strip: Kubert drew *Tales of the Green Berets* for three years. (1965)

KUBERT: I find that the old way is still the best way for me. I try to start with a good opening, block out where I'm going to take it, figure the ending, and fill in each sequence, trying to make sure that the pacing doesn't lag. I'll then take another piece of paper after I've got the story broken down into stick figures. I find a lot of times that unless I notate I forget what the hell the sticks are supposed to be doing! [laughter]

EISNER: Oh yeah. My roughs have little notes along the sides, like, "Man running up the steps." Or sometimes you'll work with a sequence and get another idea, like, "Gee, this could be better shown if I did a cutaway of the building." So I'll make a little note of a cutaway on the side, which only I can decipher. Later I'll include it in the inking stage.

KUBERT: Right. Right. And if I didn't have those notes by the time I got to tightening the pencils I would have forgotten what I wanted to do. The next step is the dialogue. On a separate sheet of paper I'll dialogue and caption the story.

EISNER: Do you dialogue before you arrange the panels on a given page?

KUBERT: No. I set the panels up first, then I put the dialogue in. I'll arrange the panels and the sequences and then I'll dialogue on a separate sheet of paper. Then I'll refine that. The advantage I find in being able to write my own stuff is that when I'm ready to ink I can again refine the text to go with it.

EISNER: Holy smoke! Do you realize, Joe Kubert, you haven't learned anything new since you left my shop in Tudor City! [laughter] And I'm very disappointed! [more laughter] I was hoping you'd learned something new!

KUBERT: I've tried a million ways. I've tried them all. But this seems to be the most successful for me.

EISNER: Great! We've got an opening for you in my studio. [laughter] Sweeping up in the afternoon, of course, erasing, a little whiting out... But in the mornings we'll let you...

KUBERT: I can play handball with Tex!

EISNER: ...And do a little inking here and there on somebody's stuff. [laughter] I seriously believe that the way one works has to do with his thinking process. Obviously, this thinking process also has an effect on the work that comes out. It also has a lot to do with the relationship the artist has with his work. The process we have just outlined totally involves the artist with the work itself, whereas if one is just taking a cold script to illustrate — and I mean illustrating in its narrowest sense — then, as you said about the artists in the 50's, somehow or another it remains something not all together yours.

KUBERT: Well, I know how to substantiate what we've just been talking about. I think that probably the most successful work that I've done collaborating with



Sgt. Rock felt the futility of war and human frailty under the duress of battle. (1968)

another person was doing the Sgt. Rock character when Bob Kanigher was editing and writing it. We attained a level of understanding between the two of us where he trusted me to make whatever changes I wanted as far as the drawing was concerned. I felt a kind of freedom as if I was doing the whole job myself. Those Sgt. Rock stories that I did under those circumstances were probably more successful than when I was restricted by a too-tight script.

EISNER: Did you ever have the situation where you worked, say, as Joe Simon and Jack Kirby did, working with a partner in total team?

KUBERT: There's only one time when it came close to it and I swore off it afterwards. I would never do it again. It was when I did *The Green Berets* strip.

EISNER: Oh, and then you worked as a

team with the writer...

KUBERT: It was supposed to be on a team basis. It started out that way between the two of us, but things sometimes change as you go along. It didn't work.

EISNER: That takes us back now to you at DC with Infantino, and you're handling editorial work...

KUBERT: The major books were always the superhero books — Superman and the superheroes; the underwear characters. Those were not the characters I had. But I did handle all the war books, most of which were pretty successful, along with adventure books like *Tomahawk*, *Tarzan* and *Korak*.

EISNER: What was your editorial philosophy at that time? Can you recall who you were writing for in these books? The reader? Or "the market," as they say? 27

NOW THAT I WAS ALONE...
AND DIDN'T HAVE TO KEEP
FROM EASY WHAT I WAS
THINKIN'... I HEARD IN EVERY
SLOSHIN' FOOTSTEP OF
MINE...



YOU'RE GOIN' TO GET IT! YOU'RE GOIN' TO GET IT-- LIKE BUSTER
AND ICE CREAM SOLDIER GOT IT! YOU'RE GOIN' TO GET IT...

KUBERT: The market was still a "general" market.

EISNER: When do you mean by the term general? Do you mean adults too? Or was it the ten-year-old-from-Kansas-City that they always referred to?

KUBERT: Now that's a very interesting question because my contention is that we're always writing for ourselves. I've never consciously sat down and written for a specific age group. What I've tried to do in editing the books and writing my own stuff is to do material that was interesting to me. Hopefully then it would please somebody else.

EISNER: What about the level of writing and the subject matter? Suppose I come in and I bring you a feature and, say, it revolves around a plot about man's relationship with God. Would you say to me, "Will, this is not for our market?"

KUBERT: I think that we do have sophisticated adults that read comic books. But I think they're still not in the majority in the United States. So, if you came up with that kind of book I'd say, "Well, you're shooting for the wrong audience." Even if you called it *A Contract With God*!

EISNER: So you did have a preception of an audience?

KUBERT: Yes, but I don't know that it was really conscious. Look at Kipling's *Jungle Book* or any of the Jack London books. Are those written for young people or are they written for adults? I think those books are accepted on a variety of levels.

EISNER: Well, they're adventure stories that had adult elements, but it's a good point. Basically, I'm referring to the elements that go into writing for a given age group. I pursue this because comics always thought of themselves as dealing with a specific age group, like children's books. Right?

KUBERT: I think that was true, Will. The superhero characters were generally planned for a younger audience. *Superman* was drawn and written so that it'd be understood by youngsters from the

ages of two to ten.

EISNER: So there was an editorial frame in your publishing house?

KUBERT: Yes, a frame that locked us in long before we assumed editorial responsibilities.

EISNER: What were you thinking at the time? Who were you thinking your reader was? Were you thinking your reader was an adult?

KUBERT: I never really did give it a hell of a lot of thought. I would say that I'm looking for readers between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. Again, my own criteria was, "What do I enjoy reading?"

EISNER: At that time? I'm talking about then. I'm not talking about now, because I think the readership is different now. It seems to me that the true function of an editor is providing direction to artists and writers.

KUBERT: Right. I agree.

EISNER: Well now, I'm trying to make a point. I think that we perceive a change in reader and reader level today.

KUBERT: Definitely. I think that the preponderance of our audience today is in the group that I just described to you, that is, from fourteen to twenty-five, whereas before we had a tremendous number in the four to fourteen group.

EISNER: I see. So in other words, it has moved up in age. But what about the level of intellect. Age and intellectual level are not always synonymous. There are twenty-five year old cretins too, you know. During World War II I tried to sell the Army training people the use of comics as a teaching tool. But they resisted. To them, only "morons" read comic books. It used to grind me when I heard that and yet I realized it was in some ways a deserved condemnation because the kind of stuff that the comics were putting out was not directed at anyone else.

KUBERT: And we were the perpetrators.

EISNER: What I'm hoping now is that comics, this medium that I call a literary form, is moving toward a level where it can deal with things of greater moment. Sequential art, or comics, can do much

more than it has done.

KUBERT: That's interesting. I don't know if it's true. I think that the kind of audience that we're slanting our work toward is becoming more accepting of the sequential art form you describe... a combination of top-of-the-line writing and illustration. They're the same people who go to see a movie like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Audiences that run the gamut of age and interest. Adults go to see it and they love it too. Youngsters love it. But remember, Will, *Raiders* didn't have a hell of a lot of intellectual content.

EISNER: You're not talking about subject matter and content. You're talking about an age level target.

KUBERT: It's entertainment!

EISNER: Well, it's entertainment employing all the cliches we are all familiar with. Actually, it was tongue-in-cheek throughout. The director said, "This is cliché. Remember? This is the kind of stuff that you used to see in the Saturday afternoon serials. I give it to you again." And so everybody slaps their thigh and laughs. So you see there is an intellectual application, because it was in its way a satirical piece, dependent on a sophistication born out of experience. The audience in this case must be thirty-five or forty or older. Now I enjoyed it because it had all those familiar cliches. I laughed and laughed because, presented in mock seriousness, they were very funny.

KUBERT: But, intellectually, it was not a provocative film. It was entertaining.

EISNER: But it was intellectual in a sense because it talked to your perspective. Now the fifteen year old kid who saw that had never been exposed to all those cliches before. To him, it was simply a great adventure story. No intellectualization there. That was the genius of the film. Just as in the case of *E.T.* which took a theme that has been used before. Many others have written about the extra terrestrial who comes here and is lost on this planet. You must have done it. I've done it. What he did was put a heart in it, and suddenly it became a marvelous

story and audiences were crying over this little, [chortle] horrible-looking creature. I guess we have a little disagreement here.

KUBERT: No, I think the difference we have has to do with the stuff that is coming out in comic books which some call "intellectual." That material, I feel, is more heavily oriented toward entertainment and amusement than it is an intellectual endeavor. I think there's a need that you're filling, especially with the material you're doing. And Europe is bringing comics up to another level. But we have not come anywhere near that in the comic book business here in the U.S.

EISNER: Ah, well. What you're doing is separating the ten cent comic book from the kind of comics that the Europeans are doing or that Art Spiegelman and I are trying. I mean in comic books, not in newspaper strips.

KUBERT: Syndicated strips today... I don't know of any that would describe themselves as being intellectual. Perhaps many readers delude themselves that the comics they like are intellectual. Most of the comic books we're doing I put on par with *Star Wars* or *Raiders* or *E.T.* or *Tarzan*.

EISNER: Science fiction.

KUBERT: It's just *good story telling*! It's interesting, fascinating, fast-paced *good story telling*. That's what we try to do. That is the thrust I'm taking in comic books.

EISNER: So it really wouldn't have a place in the comics?

KUBERT: Intellectualizing in place of entertainment? I don't think so. I really don't think so.

EISNER: Do you think, then, that there should be a kind of separation that let the what I call "ten cent comic books" in full color...

KUBERT: I do believe there are offshoots and I'm certainly not discussing this from the standpoint of absolutes. There are at-

tempts constantly being made to take off from what I've just described: *Heavy Metal*, even though it's emanated from Europe, *Epic*, from Marvel, is an attempt in that direction...

EISNER: Then you see the direction that it's moving. There is an opportunity for the young Joe Kuberts and the young Will Eisners. There is an opportunity to write either adventure stuff or something heavy. Am I putting it fairly?

KUBERT: Yes. Will, what you're doing and the attempts that you've made are really admired by people in this business.

EISNER: Well why just in this business? What am I doing for people in this business?

KUBERT: You're pointing a way. A *Contract With God* was a fine literary attempt. It was a complete departure from anything that's been done before. You put together a novel, a story that has a content that does not depend on overt dramatics or "hamming up." It was done from a base of a solid story and held the interest of readers because of your illustrative interpretations. Comic books try to hit with a sledgehammer impact. *Heavy Metal* makes an attempt to impress with beautiful illustrations. Beautiful illustrations, as you well know, don't necessarily tell a story. If it doesn't convey what the text or story is about, it's worthless. And if the text is poor, even the best of drawing will not save it. The "dime comics" that we're talking about develop their contents on the basis of slapstick, superhero slam-bang. A *Contract With God* was from none of those areas. You were standing there very barefaced, very undraped.

EISNER: Well, L... L... L...

KUBERT: I'm not trying to compliment you; I'm just making candid comparisons.

EISNER: You're not? Hmmm. I resent that! [laughter] No, as a matter of fact, I'm glad to hear you say that because that is exactly what my intention was. I

believe that the magazines you're talking about are providing what might be called sensory experiences. I'm trying to deal with subject matter that requires a great deal of thought, communicated via the only medium that I really understand and can command. I only know how to write and draw together. I'm not satisfied with writing words alone.

KUBERT: You can't even type! [laughter]

EISNER: Well, I use two fingers. [chuckle] I think this brings us to a discussion about teaching. We both teach. You're running a school and I'm teaching a class. Essentially, we're both passing along to a new generation all the things that we've learned; what we've been talking about here plus a philosophy that we have to be pretty careful about. Obviously, both of us have spent a lot of time thinking it out. There is a serious responsibility in the fact that if you tell a youngster something, give him a point of view, you run the risk of it sticking with him. He may believe it! That always sober me!

KUBERT: What you're saying is something we both have given a lot of serious thought to, for me, more so since the school has been running. I didn't realize the kind of responsibility involved in working and living with aspiring, talented people for such an extended period of time, involving myself in their lives and futures. That is a heavy responsibility. You know you say it facetiously, but it's...

EISNER: No, I meant it half-jokingly, but it does frighten me at times. That's why I decided to write a text book: to put it on record so I could defend it.

KUBERT: Those are the things I didn't figure on when we started the school.

EISNER: Joe, I remember talking with you somewhat like this on the day you called and said, "Will, I'm going to start a school." I remember we discussed it at great length. How long ago was that?

KUBERT: We're going into our seventh year now.

THE LIGHTS FROM THE BURNIN' SHIPS WENT OUT... WE WERE LEFT IN THE DARKNESS AGAIN... BUT--I KNEW THE COMBAT-HAPPY JOES WERE LISTENIN'--AND I HAD TO STOP THIS SOLDIER'S RAVIN'--BEFORE IT WOULD TEAR AWAY WHATEVER STILL KEPT EASY ON ITS FEET TO FACE THE ENEMY.

NOTHIN'S EVER
LOST IN WAR!

I'M LOST, SERGEANT! EVERYONE'S
LOST! YOU AND EASY TOO!
LOST! LOST! LOST!!



EISNER: Seven years? How many students did you have the first year?

KUBERT: Our first year we had twenty-two students.

EISNER: And today you have what?

KUBERT: A hundred seventy-five.

EISNER: Oh, fantastic growth. Well, you must be doing something right. I know that a lot of students that have come to talk to me hold your school in high regard. I've been out there. I want to tell you right now that if I were starting out, I'd go to your school.

KUBERT: Thank you, Will. I'm so grateful. And I want to tell you, everybody that has been lucky enough to have been present when you gave your talks at our school are still talking about the points you made. It stuck with them.

EISNER: How about the argument you and I had on how to clean a brush?

KUBERT: That still hasn't been resolved! [chuckle]

EISNER: Ah! I think the way to clean a brush is to take a large scissors. [laughter]

KUBERT: And cut the point off! [laughter]

EISNER: Tell me a little bit about the basic premise of the school, because I think it impinges on the philosophical approach that we're talking to.

KUBERT: Well, perhaps to some extent, but what we've been talking about till now is the whole creative attitude in putting together a piece of work that includes the writing as well.

EISNER: Do you require all your students to write?

KUBERT: No, not at all. That's where the big difference is.

EISNER: Oh. I require it of my students.

KUBERT: That, to me, would be an almost insurmountable task, from the standpoint of time. We only deal with the drawing aspects and how to apply illustration to text; what the job of the illustrator is. That doesn't bar them from attempting their own ideas. But to develop a writer would take as much time and effort as it takes to develop a cartoonist.

EISNER: I would like to get an argument out of this, but, in all fairness, you're teaching a school and I'm teaching a class and that's a big difference. I have to skim very quickly. I have a student for only three hours a week and you have a student for three years of his life.

KUBERT: That's right. Five days a week. Seven days a week, actually. If we were to teach writing, it would be absolutely compulsory to start another school that would be specifically devoted to teaching writing for comics, which is, as you know, an art in itself; a dying art with highly specialized techniques.

EISNER: You say that writing for our medium is a dying art?

KUBERT: Absolutely. The people who are coming in to write for comic books have acquired their basic abilities from



Aerial Perspectives: *Enemy Ace* (1969)

reading other comic books.

EISNER: A very good point!

KUBERT: The people who first came to write well for comic books came from reading all kinds of literature. The masters. The classics. I think that's where the softness is in writing today.

EISNER: Isn't this then the result of a large body of artists coming into the field being trained by schools like yours with the sole thought of concentrating their major efforts on drawing and the visual execution of a piece of writing that they're going to be handed?

KUBERT: I hope not.

EISNER: Well, I'm issuing a challenge and I want to hear a rebuttal to it.

KUBERT: Our school is devoted to teaching art, but that in and of itself doesn't mean that we train people merely to accept blindly the job that's given to them. What we do as much as possible—as much the instructor can work into assignments—is to put whatever innovative ideas that the student has and combine them into his art chores. We don't get involved with his writing ideas where it will inhibit his drawing assignments. I think that it's important for an artist to know good writing. Our graduate, generally, is not going to be a Will Eisner or a Hal Foster right off the bat. That level of competency takes years of experience and work. The first job that they'll probably get will be working for somebody else or work based on a script. And that's what they're going to have to know how to do.

EISNER: So, would you say that's the general philosophy of your particular school?

KUBERT: Let me give a specific example.

We have a class in narrative art. The instructor conducts this course in narrative art for three hours. There are two courses per day, each lasting three hours. He will start out with a lecture. The lecture will last anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour, whereupon he describes the particular assignment which will usually extend anywhere from one to three weeks for completion. That's only one of the ten courses the student will have that week. Another course might involve a particular assignment where the instructor says, "I'll describe a story as follows: A one-page story. It takes place in ancient Rome. A child is running through the streets. He's looking behind himself in fear. It's at night. He turns a corner and comes face to face with the object from which he was trying to escape. That object is up to you and your imagination. What is it the fleeing child comes face to face with? It could be Mickey Mouse. It could be an ogre. Anything." What we try to do in the assignments is to give freedom for interpretation and creativity. We try not to lock the student into a story, yet we don't want him to be a writer either. It'd be too tough. And it would never get done. Many budding cartoonists would find themselves *not* drawing. They would say, "I can't think of anything to draw!" So we give them a framework. Some may *never* be writers.

EISNER: Out of this he learns how to deal with another story idea which he might get later on.

KUBERT: Correct. But we try not to in-

hibit creativity or ideas. In fact, we invite it as much as possible.

EISNER: Okay, that's a teaching process I find valid. I don't do it in quite that way, but it isn't a difference in philosophy, only in method. I have three hours each of whatever many days I teach and...

KUBERT: But you've given a variation in your classes. I remember when I spoke to your class. I saw some of the work that your students were doing, and you described a story to them that they were to illustrate. I remember it had to do with a character walking downstairs...

EISNER: Yeah, well that was an exercise of a one day nature because they always ask, "How do I get an idea?" It comes up every year. So I teach, or rather, I explore how to get an idea and in the process, of course, they get an idea. For instance, walking down the steps, how many landings are there? Well, there are two. Suppose there were fifteen landings and it's dark. All of a sudden an idea emerges and a story emerges. It's similar to what you were talking about. I have a different problem. I'm teaching sequential art as an art form itself. They are in the School of Visual Arts presumably learning all the other background things that one must know and I'm dependent on that. Occasionally I teach anatomy simply because some kids never took anatomy. I get impatient and I teach it to them. KUBERT: We have an anatomy course which is slanted toward cartooning rather than a fine arts or charcoal sketch approach.

EISNER: Again, with your school and what you're doing, influencing a hundred or two hundred people a year...

KUBERT: Oh no. Not a hundred or two hundred a year. Not yet.

EISNER: ...who are clones? [chuckle]

KUBERT: No! [chuckle] You know, some applicants display a fear in the interview that takes place prior to acceptance into the school. We explain that we do not clone people. We don't turn out a bunch of Irwin Hasens or Joe Kuberts or Hy Eismans... or Will Eisners.

EISNER: Oh. Do you know I had a vision of standing on Riverside Drive, looking at the Jersey side of the cliffs [laughter] and suddenly hundreds of students are coming over the cliffs like Indians — you know these Western movies — all roaring over the cliffs with their pens aloft, and swimming across the river. [laughter] I know that a lot of your students are now at DC and a number of them are at Marvel, so apparently you're doing something right, because these people have an eye for talent and have "glommed" on to people that you've turned out. Before we go on let's get back a little to your last years at DC. I know you haven't really left them but I assume that when the school started seven years ago you had to diminish some of your DC work.

KUBERT: I cut back on my editorial chores except for *Sgt. Rock*. That's the

one I remain with and I still am editing. In fact, my third year students have an opportunity, through arrangement with DC, whereby selected students under an instructor's supervision may do backup features for that book. For the first time they can see their work reproduced in a national publication. Incidentally, for the last two years prior to graduating, every third year student has had their work published. This is a tremendous assist for them because, as you know, there's a big difference between an original illustration and that same original when it is published.

EISNER: That's quite a thing. Every one of the graduating students? [whistles]

KUBERT: Every one for the past two years.

EISNER: And would you say DC would not publish anything that wasn't worth being published?

KUBERT: Not really. My publisher as well as all the editors realize the difference between students and that of the top pros in the business. But this is an opportunity for new talent to enter the field and learn at the same time. And the quality of student work is supervised by

a professional, always. These students will eventually be the new crop of Neal Adams and Jack Kirby and they must have the opportunity to have their work published as early as possible, to make mistakes and to learn.

EISNER: I think having your work published is part of the learning process.

KUBERT: What I am doing, Will, is an extension of my own experience at your place in Tudor City more than forty years ago. I don't know how many times I've talked about my first job at your place and how it's helped me at DC.

EISNER: You mean you're still sweeping up at DC? [laughter]

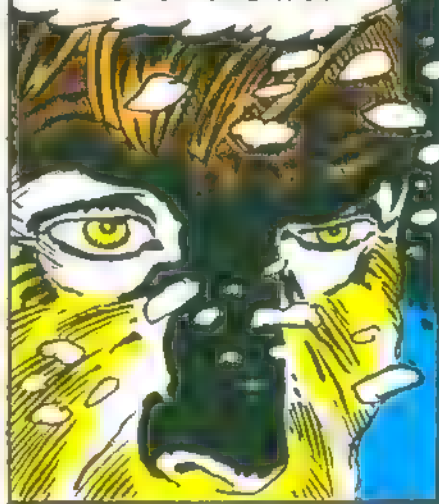
KUBERT: That broom is worn down to the handle. It gives the students a better idea of what to expect once they step out into the cold, cruel, real world. Some have made it to star status, but these are the exceptions, not the rule. I want them to know that when they come out of the school, they're going to be prepared for an entry level position in comics. More important, they're going to be able to handle whatever comes down the pike in the field of commercial art, and comic books is only a part of...

EISNER: That's a pretty good point. I try to get that across to students. I generally have a class of thirty-five. It dwindles down to thirty by the time a few leave or get bored with what I'm saying or something. Anyhow, I know that a large percentage of them are never going to get into comic books and that's why I keep the major thrust of the course on sequential art as a literary art form.

KUBERT: I think that's very wise.

EISNER: So, school and syndicated strips aside, you've worked exclusively

THE DEAD ARE FORTUNATE!...
NEVER AGAIN MUST THEY
WRESTLE WITH CONSCIENCE!
IT IS FOR US, THE LIVING...
WHO MUST JUSTIFY WAR'S
WANTON KILLING! FOR AS
LONG AS WARS LAST...



Enemy Ace ponders war. (1970)

for DC since the 50's. And now?

KUBERT: Most of my drawing efforts at DC have been covers. I've been averaging several covers a month. No inside work, really, because that would commit me to a schedule that I just couldn't maintain. So I've been editing the books and I've been riding herd on the backup features that my students are doing.

EISNER: Let's get back to more details on editing. What are you doing? I think a lot of comic book artists have only a dim idea of what goes into that.

KUBERT: As you know, Will, the person who edits the book has the responsibility of that publication. It falls upon him to select the direction that particular publication is going to take. After deciding subject matter, a writer, an artist is found and plotting begins.

EISNER: Does he make the assignments?

KUBERT: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

EISNER: So the editor says, "Okay, this is a book about superhero G and superhero G has extra-sensory perception, and so forth."

KUBERT: That's right. He lays out the preimeters.

EISNER: Right. Then he calls in an artist and a writer?

KUBERT: First the writer usually works with the editor. Then a team is formed.

EISNER: The editor's function, then, would be to bring in the writer and say, "Now here's what I want you to do."

KUBERT: We plot story back and forth, developing characters and so on...

EISNER: The writer goes back, brings you back your script, you look at the script...

KUBERT: I edit the script.

EISNER: You edit the script. That's what 31

I want to get into. You go over it and you change it. You say, "This shouldn't end this way." Do you do that in concert with the writer or are you free of the writer and you just go ahead and make the change?

KUBERT: It depends. If there are really extensive changes that have to be made, then the writer should have the job of re-writing. But there shouldn't be, because that should have been determined in the original plotting session. The writer would know where and how the beginning, middle and end of the story will fall.

EISNER: I see. Now you've got the script and you call the artist in?

KUBERT: First I edit the script.

EISNER: Okay, you've edited. You don't hand him a script until you've edited it. What do you exactly mean by editing?

KUBERT: That consists of making sure there is a smooth flow of story, dramatics and dialogue. Sometimes a story that reads well doesn't draw well.

EISNER: Do you take this guy's script and make thumbnail sketches?

KUBERT: No. But I have done that.

When I was doing *Tarzan* I sent not thumbnails but very extensive drawings of each page for the Philippine artists to illustrate. But in the case of a script where a domestic artist is doing it, what I do is edit the script to the extent of text captions, descriptions and problems relative to illustrations. Is there a possible snag here? Does the story flow properly? Do I want a close-up here instead of a longshot? Should this be one action or two?

EISNER: Is that described in the script, with words?

KUBERT: Yes. Close-up. Longshots. They're all spelled out in the script.

EISNER: Because I know Marvel has a different system.

KUBERT: Quite different.

EISNER: Marvel provides a synopsis or précis and the artist works from the précis. So here the artist is really given stage directions.

KUBERT: Ours is like a shooting script for a movie. That kind of script that you have called Marvel-style is also done up at DC. There are a few people that know how to write that kind of script and do it well. I think it's been abused by some writers. Do you know the way the system works?

EISNER: I know the Marvel system. Generally the précis is a page length and the whole story is there. The artist gets this, breaks it down, lays it out, and comes back with the penciled drawings...

KUBERT: The whole load falls to the artist!

EISNER: ...And then the script writer will put in balloons wherever the artist has allowed space for...

KUBERT: Or if he hasn't allowed space the balloon would be right on top of any part of the composition.

EISNER: Well, I have a negative attitude toward that, but I also have a negative attitude toward total movie shooting script. Negative in the sense that I don't like to work with it. I, Will Eisner, could work more easily with the Marvel system, but on the other hand, I doubt if I were running a production shop today whether I would use that system. [chuckle]

KUBERT: If someone else were dialoguing your story, you would kill...

EISNER: Oh, I would kill the story.

KUBERT: No, you would kill that person putting in the dialogue!

EISNER: No, I wouldn't kill him. He'd just starve to death, that's all. [chuckle]

KUBERT: I've seen some beautiful artwork ruined because of misplacement and bad judgment concerning captions and balloons.

EISNER: It would be very hard for me to work that way, but that's because I have spent forty years of my life writing my own.

KUBERT: You're biased. And so am I.

EISNER: Yeah. What we think is a result of our own experience. You can work with such a script. You've done it.

KUBERT: I have, but I feel that it really is not fair to the artist. If I were working on someone else's character I would much prefer to have a shooting script which I could edit. The other way means that after I do the entire job of penciling, then someone who is going to be writing the dialogue is going to spot that dialogue. That is assuming the artist's role, because spotting dialogue and captions is a vital part of the art composition. When I rough out a story I design my dialogue and captions into the composition of that panel. How much space am I allowed for art and how much for text? If I plan a large dramatic shot and it comes back from the guy completely filled with text it may have destroyed the impact that I wanted.

EISNER: Very good point! I agree with you that balloons are part of the composition. How do you feel about connected balloons? You know, a guy is speaking and about three balloons are coming out of the same mouth.

KUBERT: I think it works, depending on the situation. It's a good gimmick to break up an extensive piece of dialogue. It's easier to read, and many readers tend to get bored if they see a lot of copy clustered close together.

EISNER: I have railed against it in my classes. I don't allow my students to do that. I have a feeling against it. I'd rather see three panels than one panel with three balloons. There's a timing factor here!

KUBERT: That's solving the problem in a different way.

EISNER: But then again, that involves a long and perhaps technical discussion. Once again, when you get into these theoretical discussions you always come down



In 1972 Kubert wrote, edited and drew *Tarzan* for DC faithfully adapting the Burroughs material while complimenting it perfectly with his expressive and animated drawing style.

to the bottom line which depends on the situation. There are no solid rules or at least arbitrary rules. Anyhow, if I were given a précis I'd put the balloons in first.

KUBERT: Ahhhh. Well, then you're doing exactly what I suggested doing in the final editing: planning your illustrations with and around text.

EISNER: Joe, let me ask you just as a closing about the ultimate goal of this medium.

KUBERT: You're doing it now. We've talked about it several times. I do feel I'm coming closer and closer, time-wise. Every one of us who draws exposes ourselves. Our

work reflects that which goes on inside of us. What you're doing is the ultimate exposition; a personal point of view. You've opened yourself up completely and that's scary.

EISNER: Are you talking about *A Contract With God*?

KUBERT: Yes.

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KUBERT: And interviewed by...

EISNER: Well, yeah. I'd like to see it reviewed by the *New York Times*. [laughter] Joe, thank you very much.

I want to get into. You go over it and you change it. You say, "This shouldn't end this way." Do you do that in concert with the writer or are you free of the writer and you just go ahead and make the change?

KUBERT: It depends. If there are really extensive changes that have to be made, then the writer should have the job of re-writing. But there shouldn't be, because that should have been determined in the original plotting session. The writer would know where and how the beginning, middle and end of the story will fall.

EISNER: I see. Now you've got the script and you call the artist in?

KUBERT: First I edit the script.

EISNER: Okay, you've edited. You don't hand him a script until you've edited it. What do you exactly mean by editing?

KUBERT: That consists of making sure there is a smooth flow of story, dramatics and dialogue. Sometimes a story that reads well doesn't draw well.

EISNER: Do you take this guy's script and make thumbnail sketches?

KUBERT: No. But I have done that. When I was doing *Tarzan* I sent not thumbnails but very extensive drawings of each page for the Philippine artists to illustrate. But in the case of a script where a domestic artist is doing it, what I do is edit the script to the extent of text captions, descriptions and problems relative to illustrations. Is there a possible snag here? Does the story flow properly? Do I want a close-up here instead of a longshot? Should this be one action or two?

EISNER: Is that described in the script, with words?

KUBERT: Yes. Close-up. Longshots. They're all spelled out in the script.

EISNER: Because I know Marvel has a different system.

KUBERT: Quite different.

EISNER: Marvel provides a synopsis or précis and the artist works from the précis. So here the artist is really given stage directions.

KUBERT: Ours is like a shooting script for a movie. That kind of script that you have called Marvel-style is also done up at DC. There are a few people that know how to write that kind of script and do it well. I think it's been abused by some writers. Do you know the way the system works?

EISNER: I know the Marvel system. Generally the précis is a page length and the whole story is there. The artist gets this, breaks it down, lays it out, and comes back with the penciled drawings...

KUBERT: The whole load falls to the artist!

EISNER: ...And then the script writer will put in balloons wherever the artist has allowed space for...

KUBERT: Or if he hasn't allowed space the balloon would be right on top of any part of the composition.

EISNER: Well, I have a negative attitude toward that, but I also have a negative attitude toward total movie shooting script. Negative in the sense that I don't like to work with it. I, Will Eisner, could work more easily with the Marvel system, but on the other hand, I doubt if I were running a production shop today whether I would use that system. [chuckle]

KUBERT: If someone else were dialoguing your story, you would kill...

EISNER: Oh, I would kill the story.

KUBERT: No, you would kill that person putting in the dialogue!

EISNER: No, I wouldn't kill him. He'd just starve to death, that's all. [chuckle]

KUBERT: I've seen some beautiful artwork ruined because of misplacement and bad judgment concerning captions and balloons.

EISNER: It would be very hard for me to work that way, but that's because I have spent forty years of my life writing my own.

KUBERT: You're biased. And so am I.

EISNER: Yeah. What we think is a result of our own experience. You can work with such a script. You've done it.

KUBERT: I have, but I feel that it really is not fair to the artist. If I were working on someone else's character I would much prefer to have a shooting script which I could edit. The other way means that after I do the entire job of penciling, then someone who is going to be writing the dialogue is going to spot that dialogue. That is assuming the artist's role, because spotting dialogue and captions is a vital part of the art composition. When I rough out a story I design my dialogue and captions into the composition of that panel. How much space am I allowed for art and how much for text? If I plan a large dramatic shot and it comes back from the guy completely filled with text it may have destroyed the impact that I wanted.

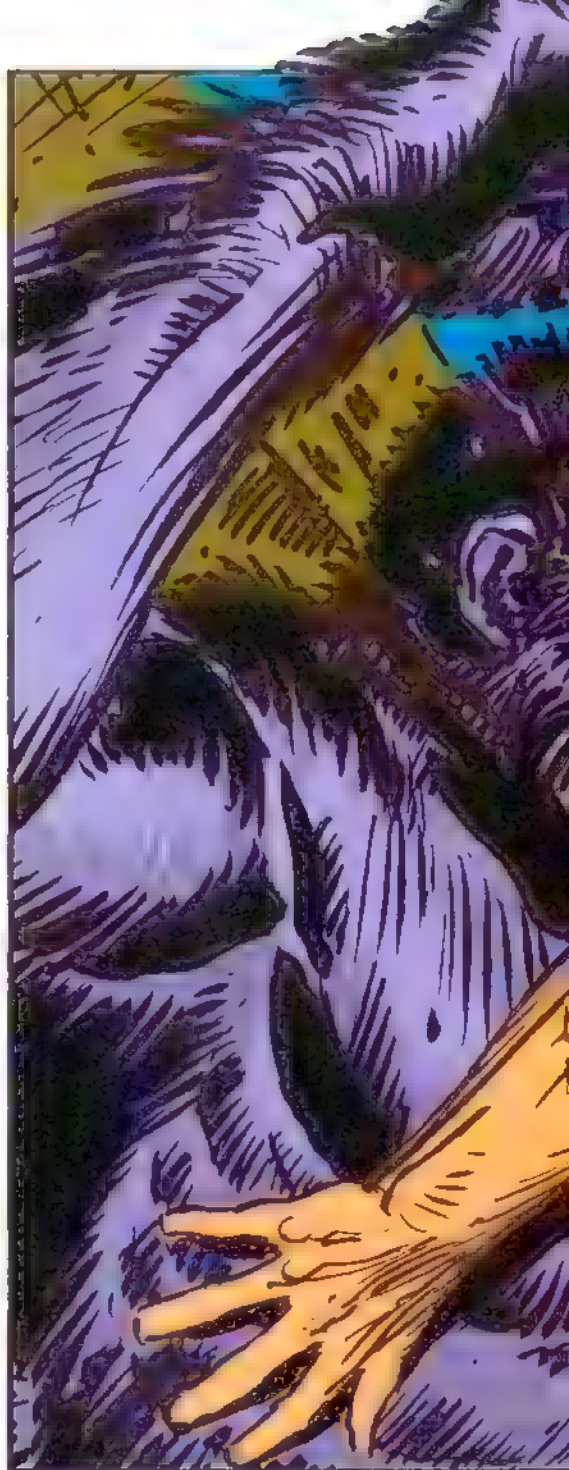
EISNER: Very good point! I agree with you that balloons are part of the composition. How do you feel about connected balloons? You know, a guy is speaking and about three balloons are coming out of the same mouth.

KUBERT: I think it works, depending on the situation. It's a good gimmick to break up an extensive piece of dialogue. It's easier to read, and many readers tend to get bored if they see a lot of copy clustered close together.

EISNER: I have railed against it in my classes. I don't allow my students to do that. I have a feeling against it. I'd rather see three panels than one panel with three balloons. There's a timing factor here!

KUBERT: That's solving the problem in a different way.

EISNER: But then again, that involves a long and perhaps technical discussion. Once again, when you get into these theoretical discussions you always come down



In 1972 Kubert wrote, edited and drew *Tarzan*

to the bottom line which depends on the situation. There are no solid rules or at least arbitrary rules. Anyhow, if I were given a précis I'd put the balloons in first.

KUBERT: Ahhhh. Well, then you're doing exactly what I suggested doing in the final editing: planning your illustrations with and around text.

EISNER: Joe, let me ask you just as a closing about the ultimate goal of this medium.

KUBERT: You're doing it now. We've talked about it several times. I do feel I'm coming closer and closer, time-wise. Every one of us who draws exposes ourselves. Our



on for DC faithfully adapting the Burroughs material while complimenting it perfectly with his expressive and animated drawing style.

work reflects that which goes on inside of us. What you're doing is the ultimate exposition; a personal point of view. You've opened yourself up completely and that's scary.

EISNER: Are you talking about *A Contract With God*?

KUBERT: Yes.

EISNER: I found that very, very hard to do because all my early years I was hiding behind a guy with a mask. I always did speak candidly about my opinions on life, but never about me. I'd like to see more of the meaningful material coming out, because the more of it there is, the more of an acceptance or a market... Ugh! I hate to use the

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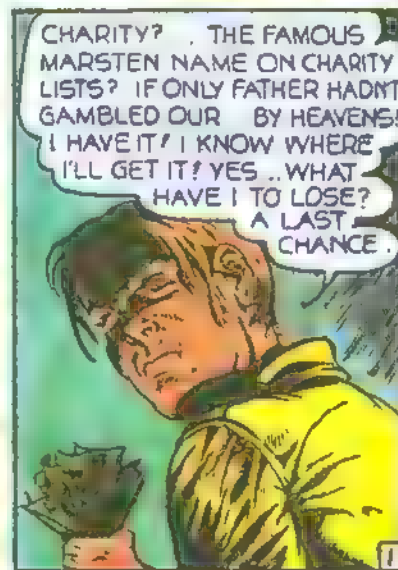
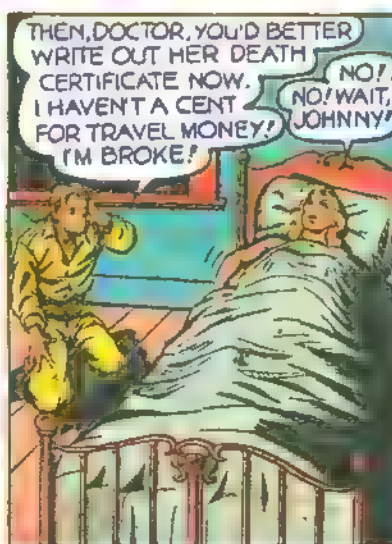
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KUBERT: And interviewed by...

EISNER: Well, yeah. I'd like to see it reviewed by the *New York Times*. [laughter] Joe, thank you very much.

SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 1940




AN HOUR LATER

YEAH? AND WHO ARE YOU?

TELL TONY ITS JOHNNY. BILLY MARSTEN'S SON HE'LL REMEMBER THE NAME MY FATHER LOST ENOUGH MONEY HERE C'MON, LET ME IN! I GOT A WAD, SEE?

MARSTEN? OK KID, COME IN



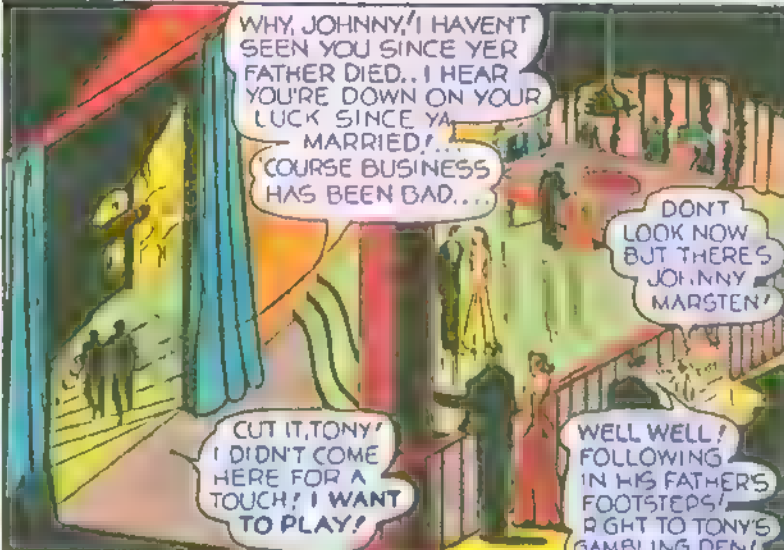
WHY, JOHNNY, I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE YER FATHER DIED.. I HEAR YOU'RE DOWN ON YOUR LUCK SINCE YA MARRIED!...

COURSE BUSINESS HAS BEEN BAD...

DON'T LOOK NOW BUT THERE'S JOHNNY MARSTEN!

CUT IT, TONY! I DIDN'T COME HERE FOR A TOUCH! I WANT TO PLAY!


WELL WELL! FOLLOWING IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS! R'GHT TO TONY'S GAMBLING DEN!



WHAT'LL IT BE, KID?

\$28.41 ON THE RED!

RED IT IS! YOU WIN, MARSTEN!



DOUBLE IT!

JOHNNY WINS!

DOUBLE IT!

JOHNNY WINS!

DOUBLE IT!

JOHNNY WINS!

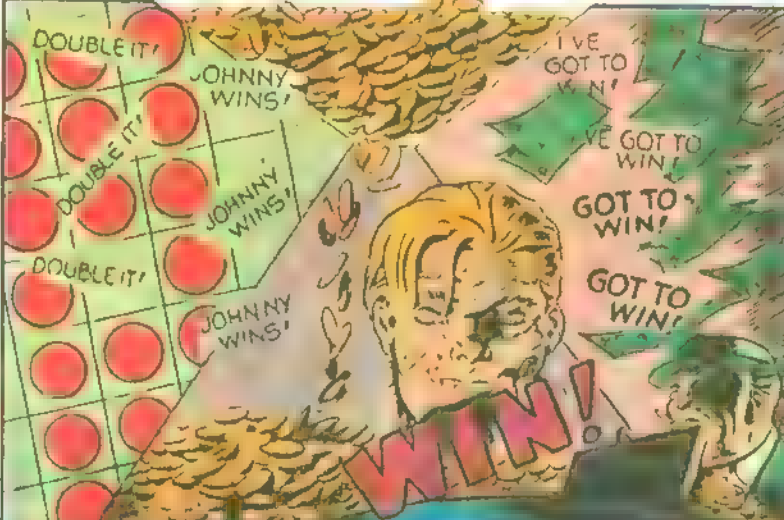
I'VE GOT TO WIN!

I'VE GOT TO WIN!

GOT TO WIN!


GOT TO WIN!

WIN!



HOUR AFTER HOUR THE DICE ROLL AND THE ROULETTE SPINS A GOLDEN WEB, CHAINING JOHNNY TO HIS CHAIR EVEN AFTER THE REST LEAVE

I'VE ENOUGH! A THOUSAND DOLLARS! I'M GOING HOME NOW MY WIFE WILL LIVE!




AH JUST A MINUTE KID! I THINK MAYBE YOU'D BETTER PLAY ONE MORE HAND WITH MY DECK!

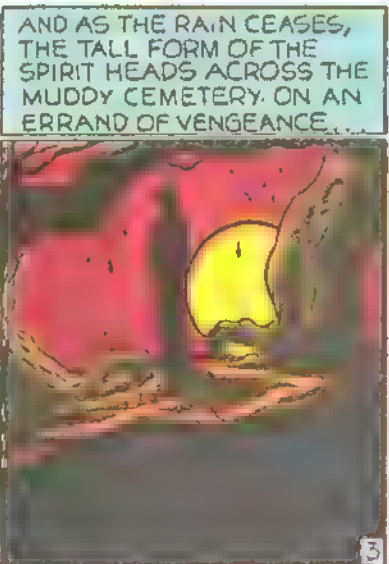
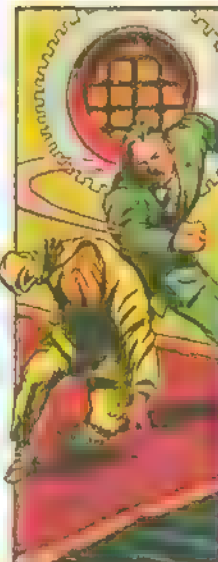
I WON IT! NO, I KNOW YOUR TRICK YOU'RE GONNA WIN IT BACK!



LOOK HERE, SUCKER! I'M IN THIS RACKET TO MAKE DOUGH. NO ONE THAT'S BROKE CAN COME IN HERE AND CLEAN UP A GRAND! NOW BEAT IT! OR DOES MONK THROW YOU OUT?

YOU CROOK! CROOK!





AT POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS

RRRING!

HELLO! WHO? THE SPIRIT? YEAH, WHAT? THE GAMBLING RACKET! TAKE MY ADVICE AND LAY OFF!

NO, I'M NOT SCARED, BUT THOSE GUYS HAVE INFLUENCE. BESIDES, EVERY TIME WE RAID THEM THEY JUST START SOMEWHERE ELSE. WHAT? OF COURSE I'D LIKE TO GET SOMETHING ON ONE OF 'EM! O.K. O.K. ...I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!

LATER

YEAH? WHO ARE YOU?

DON'T STRUGGLE! A LITTLE FRESH AIR WON'T HURT YOU!

THE SPIRIT! OPEN UP!

A MASKED MAN?

JUST CONTINUE WHAT YOU'RE DOING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... I JUST WANT TO PLAY FARO!

DEAL, PAL! AND DEAL STRAIGHT!

HOLD-UP?

YOU CLEANED US OUT. THE BANK IS BROKE!

AN HOUR PASSES

THE PILE OF CHIPS AND MONEY SHIFTS TO THE SPIRIT'S TABLE

LEAVING A DUMBFOUNDED AUDIENCE, THE SPIRIT CALMLY WALKS OFF. HIS POCKETS BULGING WITH MONEY...

AMAZING!

NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE!

FIFTY THOUSAND, NOT BAD FOR A START!

DIAMOND DEN: THANKS! YOU WIN!

WELL, I'LL BE... HE BROKE THE BANK!

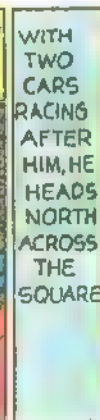
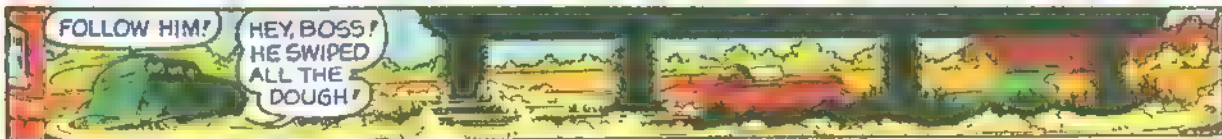
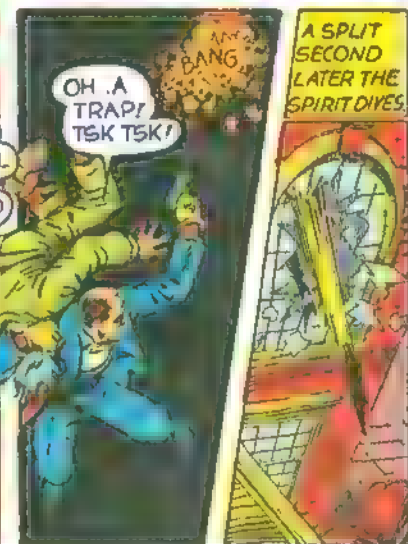
WANT TO PLAY ANOTHER HAND?

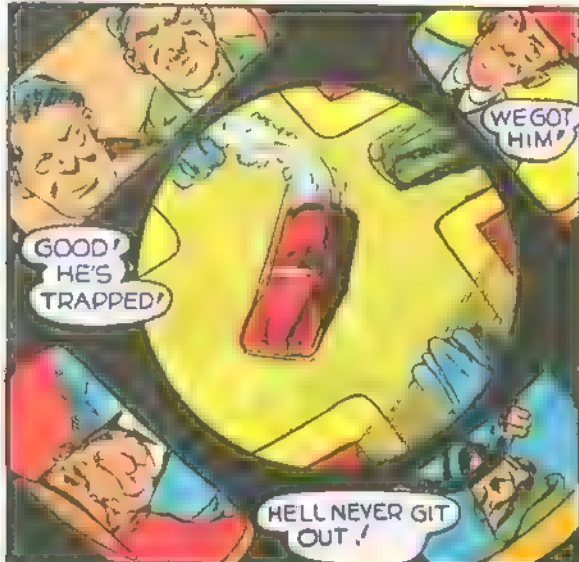
CAN'T THE HOUSE IS BROKE!

HMM \$300,000! NOT BAD! JUST ONE MORE PLACE TO VISIT!

HELLO... HELLO, MIKE? ROUND UP THE BOYS. THE SPIRIT IS CLEANING UP THE TOWN! WE GOTTA STOP HIM!

CLOSE UP THE JOINT! THAT GUY JUST BROKE THE BANK!





GOOD! HE'S TRAPPED!

WE GOT HIM!

HELL NEVER GIT OUT!

WHERE ARE THE POLICE? DOLAN WOULD FA-L MEAT A TIME LIKE THIS! OH WELL 'GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS MYSELF!

HERE GOES!



HERE HE COMES! BLAST HIM WIDE OPEN!



LOOK OUT! HE'S GONNA CRASH!



IN A FLASH THE SPIRIT CLIMBS TO THE SAFETY OF THE ROOF-TOPS, AS THE POLICE ARRIVE



AT LAST! IT'S ABOUT TIME!

STICK 'EM UP, ALL YOU GUYS! YOU, TONY! C'MON DOWN TO HEAD-QUARTERS!



WHAT FOR? IT WAS. ER ONLY A CRACK-UP!

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR THE MURDER OF JOHN MARSTEN!



IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN.

YOU SAY (COUGH) JOHNNY SENT ALL THIS MONEY TO ME... BUT (COUGH) WHERE IS HE?

ER DOWNTOWN... HE'LL BE HOME SOON!



AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS

HERE'S THE BODY OF JOHN MARSTEN, TONY. WE FOUND HIM IN WILDWOOD CEMETERY!

I DIDN'T DO IT!

BEFORE HE DIED, HE WROTE OUT THIS STATEMENT... SAYING THAT YOU AND MONK BEAT HIM UP AND DROPPED HIM IN WILDWOOD. COURSE MONK WAS KILLED IN THE AUTO CRASH, SO.

MONK'S DEAD?? HE DIDIT! MONK. I TRIED TO STOP HIM BUT MONK WAS ALWAYS A KILLER! I ADMIT I ROBBED HIM.

OK LET MONK IN!

I HEARD YA! YOU SQUEALIN' RAT! COMMISSIONER, I'LL TELL THE WHOLE STORY NOW!

MONK'S ALIVE!!

NOW THAT THEY'VE SIGNED THEIR CONFESSION, I GUESS I'D BETTER GET HOME TO MY WIFE!

MARSTEN! ALIVE!

THOSE TWO WILL GET A NICE STRETCH FOR INTENDED MURDER! GOOD LUCK, KID, AND REMEMBER, KEEP AWAY FROM GAMBLING, EVEN WHEN YOU'RE IN A JAM!

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, LONG AFTER SUNDOWN, A MAILMAN PACES NERVOUSLY BEFORE WILDWOOD CEMETERY

WELL, I'LL BE.

THE ONLY ADDRESS ON THIS LETTER IS, THE SPIRIT, WILDWOOD CEMETERY!

MUST BE A JOKE, OR

GONE!

Dear Spirit,
I will never be able to thank you enough for saving my wife's life. That's just what you did when you helped me get that money of the monkey, the rest is going to charity. I expect a job soon and the doctors here say that my wife has a even chance.
God Bless you.
John Marsten
anyone

FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF THE SPIRIT.....

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Introduction by
HERB GALEWITZ



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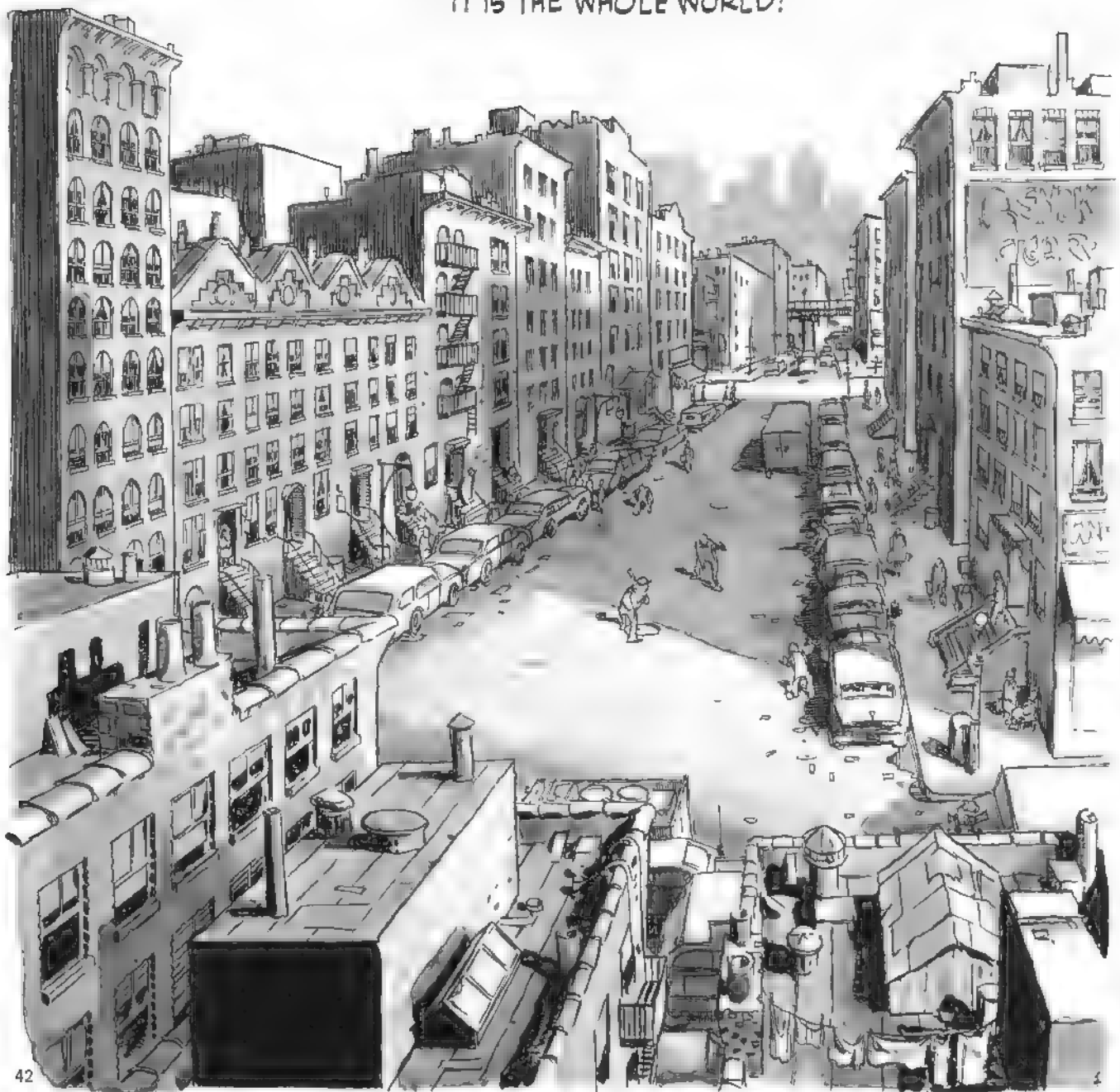
KEN PIERCE

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THE BLOCK

IN THE BIG CITY,
A VALLEY
FORMED BY THE BISECTION
OF STEEL AND CONCRETE
CLIFF DWELLINGS,
IS CALLED A BLOCK.
TO ITS INHABITANTS
IT IS THE WHOLE WORLD!



THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD

THIS..
DARLENE,
IS WHERE
I GREW UP
... RIGHT
HERE!!

MANO'MAN, THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD!
CHEEZIS, LIKE I NEVER LEFT!!
WOW, NOT MEM'RIES...



LOOK, HERE'S WHERE WE
USTA HANG OUT ON SATTIDAY NIGHT...
CHICKIES CANDY STORE.. IT WAS THERE!

LOOKS
LIKE
THE
DUMPS
NOW,
TONY

...YEAH?
CHEEZIS
THIS IS
THE OLD
STOOP!
WE USTA
PLAY
STOOP
BALL
ON
IT!



AND
HERE'S
GUIDO'S
FRUIT STORE
HABA, HABA
WE USTA
STEAL
HIS
APPLES

HYA ... I USTA
LIVE AROUND HERE
... IS OL' GUIDO
AROUND?

DIED
FIVE
YEARS
AGO

WE
BOUGHT
THE
STORE

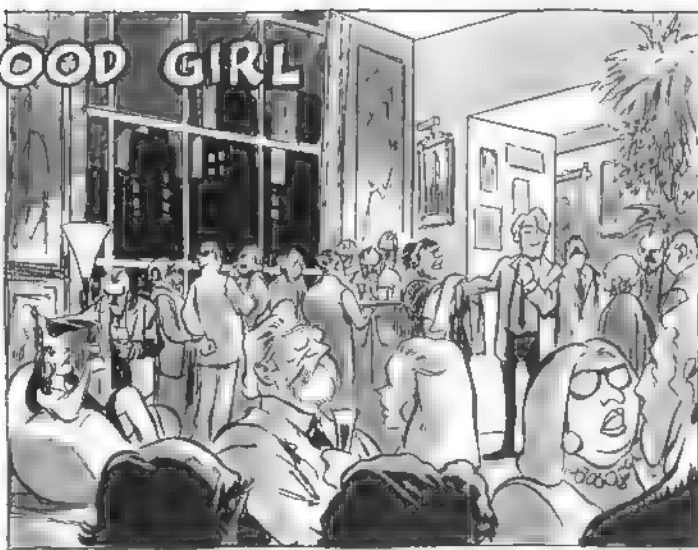
HOLYCHEE... THE
OL' BLOCK... BOYO' BOY
I FEEL LIKE AKID
AGAIN ... JUST WALKIN'
DOWN THE STREET!







NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL



SOME CLASSY BASH, AUGIE!

YEAH, CHAZ, NLTIN' BUT UPTOWN TYPES HERE



HEY, HEY, LOOKA, LOOKA 'XCUSE ME AUGIE...

YEA BO.. 'SEE WOTCHA MEAN... SEE YOU LATER



WELL, CHAZ... LOOKS LIKE YOU SCORED... THAT'S SOME CLASSY CHICK

OH, YEAH!

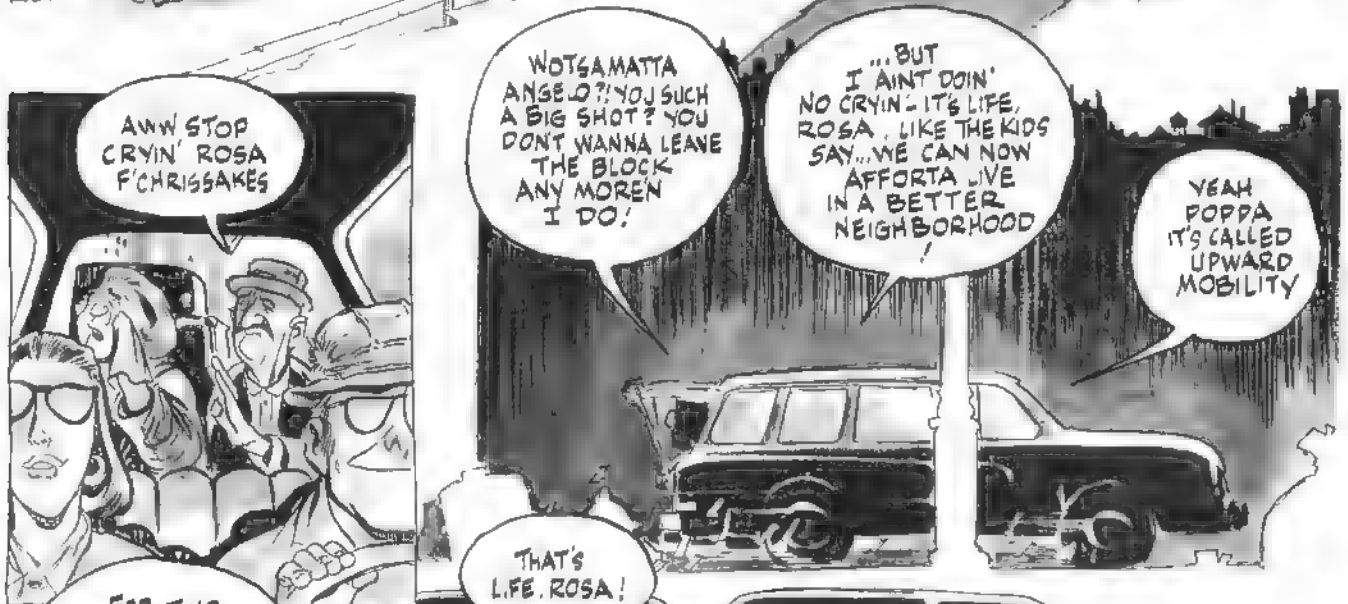
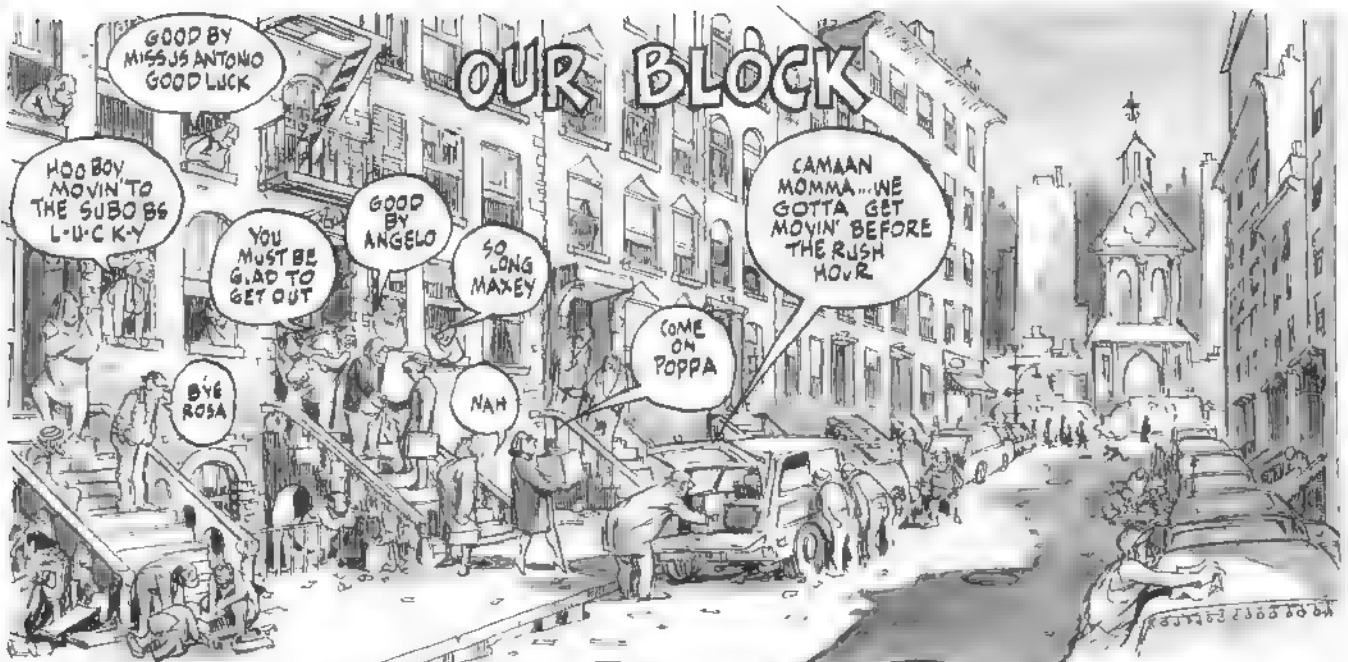


SO.. Y'GONNA CALL HER UP? I SEEN YOU GET HER ADDRESS HEY... WHY'RE YOU TEARIN' IT UP?

WASTE OF TIME!



SHE COMES FROM MY NEIGHBORHOOD!







WOT'RE
YOU YELLIN'
MRS REILLY
ATZA NOTHIN

JOE

SHADDAP
!!

MISSY
RIZZOLI
YER PLANT
IS LEAKIN'
ALL OVER
MY
RUG!

HEY!
WADDY
YOU
DEAF
UP
THERE

HEY
YOU!
THAT
YER
CAR
PARKED
OVER
THERE
?

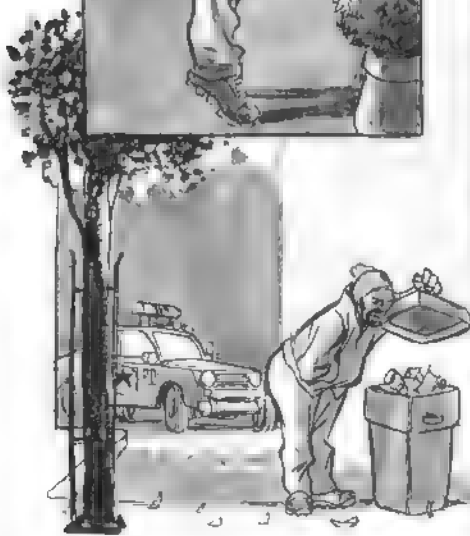
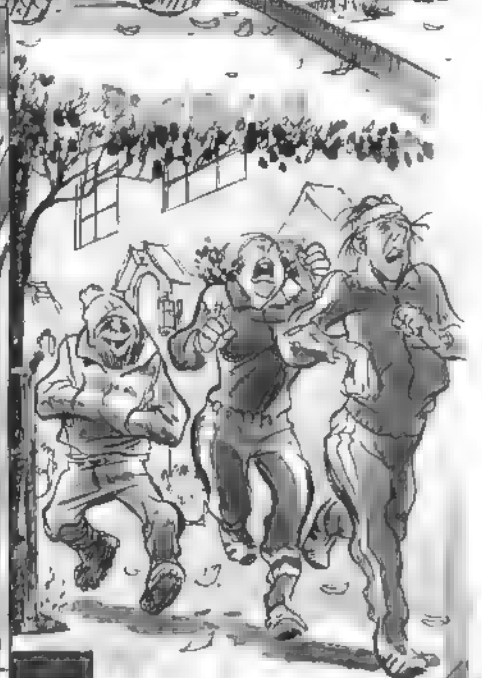
SALVATOR
CAMAN
IN!!...I GOIN'
SMACK
YOU FACE!

AAH
LIVIN' IN
TH' COUNTRY
IS FOR
BIRDS
MAXEY!

DON'T
BOUNCE
THEM
CANS
!!

Y'COULDN'T
STAND THE
NOISE OR
WHAT
ANGELO?

SEIZ MA, WE
PLAYIN' !!



ALIENS



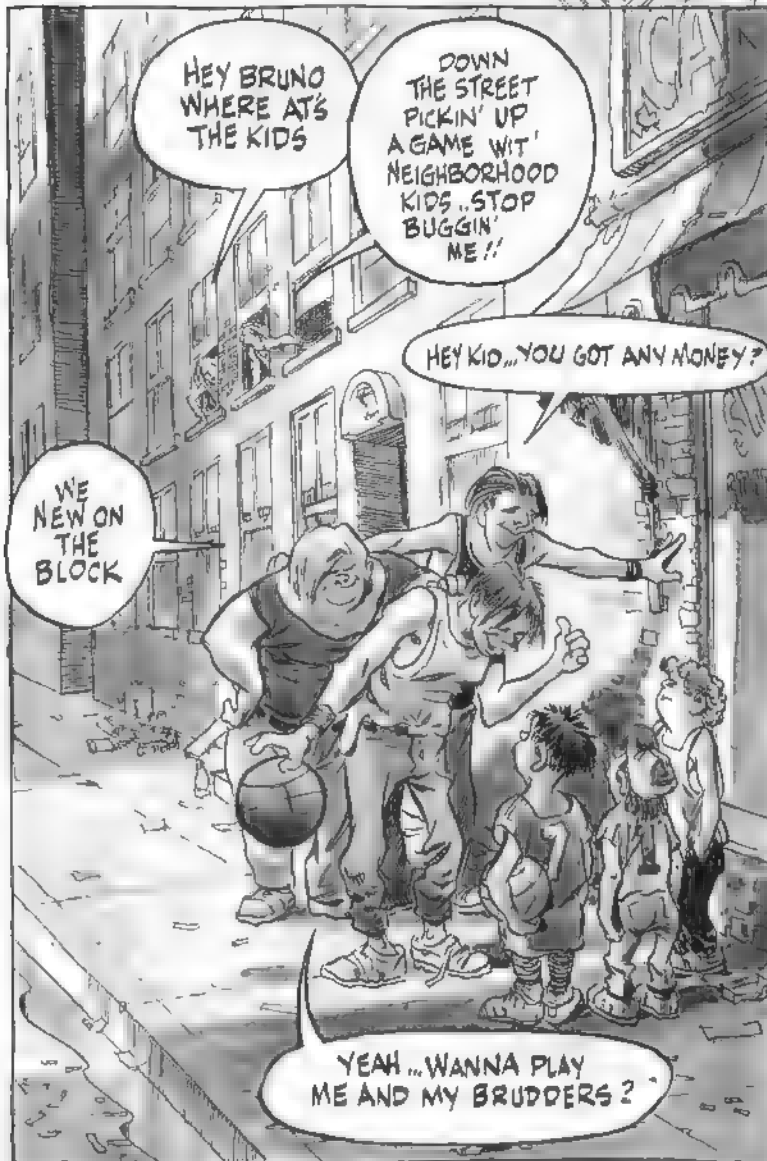
SO
C'MON WIT
THAT PIANER!
...YOU BUST IT
AND YER
GONNA PAY
THRU THE
NOSE
!

HAVE A
HEART LADY
THIS THING
IS HEAVY
!!

COME UP
STANLEY AND
BRING YER HORN
ITS TIME FOR YOU
TO PRACCE!

HEY KID...
YER MUDDER'S CALLIN'





HIGH RENT DISTRICT





DAVE SIM'S CEREBUS #48

CONQUEROR or CONQUERED?



ABRAXAS/KP

© 1983 Dave Sim

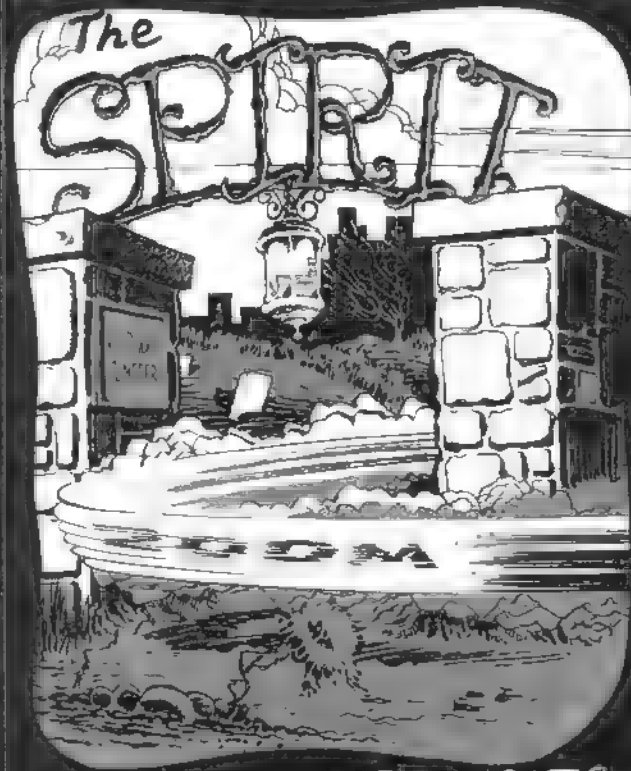


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Whiffenpoof

Originally Published June 29, 1947



BY WILLEISNER



AN WROTE TO MISTUH ROBERT MERRILL,
THE METROPOLITAN OPERA STAR, AN' ASK HIM
IF HE WOULD SING MAH SONG, "EVVY LI'L BUG"
WHEN HE HAS A CONCERT HERE IN CENTRAL CITY...
WELL, AHEM HE WROTE BACK AND SAID
YES!

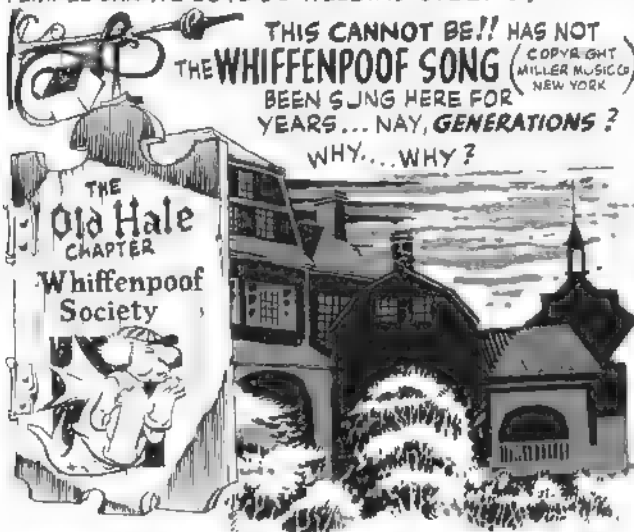
HE DID??... WELL, FINE...
BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO
WITH ME?

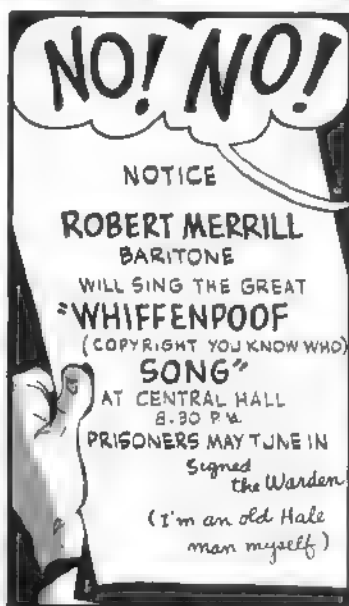




MEANWHILE ON THE ANCIENT HALLOWED CAMPUS OF OLD IVY HALE ...
 AH... DEAR OLD HALE, FROM WHOSE PLAYING FIELDS COME... BUT WAIT.. **LISTEN!**

WHAT HO... MORRIS'S... THE TEMPLE BAR WE LOVE SO WELL... IS **SILENT!**













* "THE WHIFFENPOOF SONG" BY PERMISSION © MILLER MUSIC CO. N.Y.
 "EVERY LI'L BUG"
 "WILL EISNER"
 "THE SPIRIT" BY PERMISSION © WILL EISNER

* ROBERT MERRILL BY PERMISSION OF HIS AGENTS
 THE OLD HALE CHAPTER OF THE WHIFFENPOOF SOCIETY BY PERMISS... OH FUDGE!

At this point Eisner and Harr naturally wanted to get the song published. They had met a man named Bernard Miller during the war. Miller was in the music business. He worked for RCA Victor records and was also connected with the Miller Music Publishing Co., the outfit which held the rights to the famous Yale anthem, *The Wiffenpoof Song*. Miller was further connected with the popular operatic singer Robert Merrill, and Eisner wrapped this whole bundle of circumstance up in the "Wiffenpoof" story of June 29, 1947.

Strangely enough, it was not Miller Music Co. which published Eisner and Harr's *Ev'ry Little Bug*. That honour belonged to the Robbins Music Corporation. All of Will's plans to get the song recorded came to nothing — and it is likely that this frustration is echoed in the tale of *Ebony's* hounding after Robert Merrill. The melody is catchy, the lyrics are cute, but *Ev'ry Little Bug* just never found its way onto wax.

After all his attempts to push it failed, Will kept the song around for a few more years, and even as late as 1950 one could hear it sung by a crusty old Scot named Sandy Doon.

Opportunity knocks but once, but the melody lingers on.

Here's an *Ev'ry Little Bug Checklist*, comprising all those stories in which somebody sang verses from the song. Name in parentheses is that of the singer. Reprint info is in brackets.

- 315 6/9/46 Poole's Toadstool Facial Cream (Gam) [K24]
 319 7/7/46 Dulcet Tone (Gam) [W16]
 333 10/13/46 The Heart of Rose Lee (Bucken Wing)
 342 12/15/46 The Van Gault Diamonds (Bucken Wing) [K39]
 344 12/29/46 Hubert the Duck (Mr. Parelli) [W7]
 349 2/2/47 The Cosmic Answer (Bucken Wing & Murmansk Manny)
 355 3/16/47 Hoagy the Yogi, Part I (radio) [W7] [K21]
 361 4/27/47 *Ev'ry Little Bug* (Ebony and Bill Harr) [K40]
 370 6/29/47 *Wiffenpoof* (Miller Music Co., NY (Ebony) [K40]
 377 8/17/47 The Picnic (Klink) [K32]
 461 3/27/49 The Dummy (Milkman) [W3]
 518 4/30/50 Wanted, Dangerous Job (Sandy Doon) [K17] —cat yronwode



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